

A CORRECTIVE TO ADOLESCENT DRIFT: HOW FIVE CHURCHES ARE USING A RITES OF  
PASSAGE STRUCTURE TO DEVELOP AND STABILIZE FAITH THROUGH ADOLESCENCE.

A THESIS-PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF

GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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JANUARY 2016



To MaryBeth, H, and their friends.

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

—Hebrews 19:6a

## CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER	
1. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING	1
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO RITES OF PASSAGE	26
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	56
4. DESIGN OF THE STUDY	91
5. RESULTS OF THE STUDY	111
APPENDIX	
A. QUESTIONNAIRE	152
B. EMAIL INTRODUCTION	168
C. RAW DATA	169
D. ADVENTURE 526 ROCKS	182
BIBLIOGRAPHY	183
VITA	193

## FIGURES

Figure 1: Arnold van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model	9
Figure 2: Menarche as a rite of passage	10
Figure 3: Victor Turner's transition as a period defined by anti-structure	11
Figure 4: The adolescent life stage as marked by uncertainty	19
Figure 5: The adolescent life stage marked by faith anchors	22
Figure 6: Cosmic Rite of Passage	27
Figure 7: Shalom	30
Figure 8: Sin as the act of separation between shalom and the fall	31
Figure 9: An act of incorporation required to complete the cosmic rite of passage	32
Figure 10: Circumcision as an act of incorporation into the Abrahamic Covenant	35
Figure 11: The Exodus as a rite of passage	36
Figure 12: Exile as divinely ordained liminality	40
Figure 13: In Christ, the old creation has been made new	42
Figure 14: Bar/Bat Mitzvah as a coming-of-age rite of passage	46
Figure 15: Jesus' temple experience as a rite of passage	48
Figure 16: Jesus' public ministry as a rite of passage	49
Figure 17: Baptism as an initiation into the church	50
Figure 18: Testing as a rite of passage	52
Figure 19: Ritual Classification	60
Figure 20: van Gennep's rite of passage model	66

Figure 21: Hiebert's interpretation of the van Gennep's rite of passage model	67
Figure 22: Human Lifespan	78
Figure 23: Human Lifespan: Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood	79
Figure 24: Adolescent Developmental Models	81
Figure 25: Hiebert's Integrated Approach to Understanding Adolescence	85
Figure 26: Rites of Passage Models	88
Figure 27: National Community Church's Ministry Map	127
Figure 28: Parker Hill Community Church's Family Map	129
Figure 29: Preston Trail Community Church's Phase Timeline	131
Figure 30: Website Screen Shot of Grace Community Church's Rites of Passage	132
Figure 31: Website Screen Shot of Eastern Hills	133
Figure 32: Faith Path Foyer Presence	134
Figure 33: HomePointe's Faith Path Model	134
Figure 34: Exemplar Church's programmed Rites of Passage experiences	135
Figure 35: Arnold van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model	141
Figure 36: Faith Markers	142
Figure 37: Discipleship Pathway	142
Figure 38: FBCBeaverton's 2015 Graduation Recognition	144
Figure 39: FBCBeaverton's 1998 Baby Dedication	145
Figure 40: Tarin Fox's 2012 Baptism	145

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Walt Mueller, Duffy Robbins, and Adonis Vidu for your laughter, insight, and experience in helping me better articulate ministry to the emerging generations. I also want to express my admiration for the other students that make up our 2012 D.Min. cohort. Our camaraderie greatly enhanced a wonderful learning environment.

Norm Langston and Dan Schuch, thank you for your constant direction in helping me best organize my thoughts. Your suggestions proved stronger than the writing blocks. In addition, a thank you to Bill and Lu Walker for your generous support to ensure this thesis-project would not be a financial hardship to my family.

My family feels like we hit the jackpot with our neighbors. Thank you, Bill Wilson, for identifying my editorial and grammatical errors so that the final version has the appearance of a well-written paper. Additionally, Mindy Wallace, Laura Small, and Mary Stinnert, for your insightful suggestions in constructing better sentences.

Cindy Fiala, Danny Howard, Brian Swiggart, Andy Broad, and Chelsea Bayne, you guys are the real heroes behind this thesis-project. Thank you for your willingness to share with me your passion to minister to the emerging generations.

To Kayla, my wife, there is so much more in store for you. Thank you for your patience, double duty, and constant reading of my drafts. Thanks for being a great mom, a fabulous worship leader and a great friend. Barrarahh.



## ABSTRACT

Biblical adulthood is not automatic and can get delayed or derailed in many ways. An evaluation of five exemplar church's rites of passage strategy demonstrates that a potential preventative measure occurs when the home and the church begin to leverage significant milestones in the course of adolescence, coordinating them with a spiritual truth such that a faith marker is created and celebrated by the community of those who have already acquired said faith marker. In coordination with an ongoing discipleship strategy, the accumulation of such markers will help highlight a path toward a stabilized and growing faith in adulthood.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

The goal of adolescence is to not be one any longer than you have to be.  
—Wayne Rice, Reinventing Youth Ministry

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.  
—Psalm 119:105

As the psalmist declared, God provides anchors and beacons to illuminate life's journey.<sup>1</sup> In every adolescent's life, there are events that shape understandings of truth, purpose, identity, and God. What would happen if a family, a church, or a local community began to recognize such significant events or milestones as opportunities to celebrate, solidify, and direct one's growing faith in the holy God of the Bible? The intent of this thesis-project is to discover how this is happening within five exemplar churches.

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1. All Scripture citations are taken from the 1984 New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

## Ministry Setting

At the time of this writing, I have a seven-year-old daughter and a four-year-old son. My 25 years in youth ministry has both prepared me and scared me for the spiritual and cultural battles that lie ahead for my children and their cohort. Although adolescence is a few years off for my family, my professional experience shows me that the current state of adolescence is murky and the need for guides and markers to help illuminate a path from childhood toward adulthood is critical. I am grateful for the growing amount of literature calling for a reinvigorated strategy that partners the home with the church in the discipleship of children. A Family Ministry or Next Generation leader appears to be an increasingly valuable ministry position in many growing churches.<sup>2</sup> Although these positions typically have oversight responsibilities for the preschool, children's, and youth environments, their primary attention is focused on equipping the adults to better disciple their kids, whether these adults are parents, grandparents, guardians, or other caring adults.

First Baptist Church of Beaverton Oregon or FBCBeaverton,<sup>3</sup> a 60-year-old Southern Baptist congregation, lies in a western suburb of Portland, a city that wants to be known for its postmodern weirdness.<sup>4</sup> Beaverton is the largest city in Washington

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2. Holly Tate, "6 New Church Staffing Trends in 2014," Vanderbloeman Search Group, February 4, 2014, <https://www.vanderbloemen.com/blog/the-top-10-insight-articles-of-2014> (accessed March 13, 2015).

3. For a history of First Baptist Church of Beaverton, see William Walker, ed., *Roots and Wings: An Informal History of the First Baptist Church of Beaverton* (Beaverton, OR: First Baptist Church of Beaverton, 2005).

4. Travel Portland, "Keep Portland Weird," Visitor Information Center, <http://www.travelportland.com/collection/keep-portland-weird/> (accessed July 20, 2015).

County, a county respected in the tech industry as the Silicon Forest with Intel and Textronix headlining technological development. Additionally, Beaverton is home to Nike and Columbia Sportswear and other athletic-wear headquarters such as Adidas and Keen. The Beaverton School District is comprised of students from 94 language groups, making it the most diverse population on the West Coast outside of Seattle and San Francisco.<sup>5</sup> Snow-capped mountains to the east, beaches and oceans to the west, and hiking trails to all the waterfalls in between describes the natural beauty Oregonians enjoy on a daily basis.

In 2012, FBCBeaverton began a much-needed and difficult process to evaluate its disciple-making and disciple-maturing effectiveness. This evaluation led to a governing restructure and a realignment of personnel. It also resulted in the elimination of a full-time education pastor, a full-time college pastor, a full-time youth pastor, and a part-time children/preschool coordinator. These four positions were consolidated into, what this church calls, a Christian Development Pastor. It is this position that I have been diligently and prayerfully bringing into focus and alignment with our church's renewed emphasis on the Great Commission.

Of the many disturbing trends our evaluation is bringing to light, one that is pertinent to my ministry focus is our students' transition out of youth ministry and into the adult ministry context. Since 2006, our church has celebrated the graduation of 41

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5. Beaverton School District, "Quick Facts," <https://www.beaverton.k12.or.us/about/quick-facts> (accessed June 11, 2015).

high school seniors.<sup>6</sup> Of these, only two are still involved in our FBCBeaverton church life and less than 10 are regularly involved in church life anywhere. Many national surveys and studies have been done in the past few years that corroborate, what we are observing on a local level.<sup>7</sup> Some, such as Ed Stetzer, the Executive Director of Lifeway Research, are not seeing so much disengagement of Christians from the church, but rather a better defined classification of convictional Christianity.<sup>8</sup> Like many youth ministries, FBCBeaverton has long been strategizing ways to integrate its youth population and adult population in inter-generational worship, something that the Sticky Faith Initiative discovered was the closest method to finding a “silver bullet” for a higher faith maturity.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, there has been a significant focus on rethinking youth ministry in terms of a family-based model, where partnerships with parents and other adults are prioritized. Although we believe these strategies do help students transition into the adult population with greater success, I am still concerned about those that do not and those that do, but with an underdeveloped faith.

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6. This number does not represent the totality of students that have passed through FBCBeaverton’s youth ministry; rather it only reflects the students that were in regular attendance the spring of their senior year.

7. See Scott McConnell, “LifeWay Research Finds Reasons 18- to 22-Year-Olds Drop out of Church,” *LifeWay Christian Resources*, August 7, 2007, <http://www.lifeway.com/Article/LifeWay-Research-finds-reasons-18-to-22-year-olds-drop-out-of-church> (accessed July 27, 2005). Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

8. Ed Stetzer, “MissionTrends: 4 Trends for Churches to Consider,” *Christianity Today*, June 2, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/may/look-back-and-look-ahead-for-church-in-america-4-trends-chr.html> (accessed July 27, 2015).

9. Kara Powell, Brad Griffin, and Cheryl Crawford, *Sticky Faith Youth Worker Edition: Practical Ideas to Nurture Long-Term Faith in Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 75.

This trend is causing me to wonder if the issue is not so much in helping the student transition into an adult space, but more particularly in helping a student transition into an adult faith; a faith that has been tested through the litany of adolescent experiences related to their developing biology, culture, economics, and society. A healthy anthropology of *biblical adulthood* understands a holy purpose across each of these facets. Maybe an articulated, developed, and mature worldview was delayed because an adolescent's growing faith did not have the benefit of time and support to make sense of his or her emerging freedoms and ideals about the world. This left them with a stunted or docile faith in their adult years. Maybe the disengagement that some are seeing with the emerging generation of the church is more nuanced than strategically transitioning from a youth space to an adult space. Maybe what is missing is a biblical adulthood that understands the whole of humanity as created in the image of God.

Without a solid foundation in Genesis 1:27 and then Luke 2:52, many of these emerging adults seem to be delaying responsibilities that have traditionally been gained earlier in life. In my ministry setting, for example, I have noticed that the age of getting a driver's license, a first job, or moving out of the home has been increasing. The possible reasons for this shift are exhaustive and will be explored in greater detail later; nonetheless, it is observable and has theological implications. I believe this delay to acquire such *rites of passages* are having an adverse effect on identity formation and that the loss of these *markers* are both delaying the onset of biblical adulthood and destabilizing the faith of these emerging adults.

Every person is on a path that is either leading them toward identifying themselves with Jesus Christ or identifying themselves absent of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, this path from childhood to biblical adulthood is getting harder to detect, an issue that this thesis-project will address. I believe that if there were an accumulation of special and unique milestones within a life stage coordinated with a spiritual application so that *faith marker* were developed, the path toward biblical adulthood would be better illuminated and subsequently fewer students would emerge into adulthood with an adolescent or absent faith.

For many Americans, the birth of a baby, the first day of kindergarten, a salvation experience, onset of puberty, taking the family car for a first solo drive, or launching into life following graduation generally represents significant moments or seasons of life. It is these moments that I, as our church's Christian Development Pastor, want to use as catalyst to develop and solidify an adolescent's emerging faith. If the church and home can better understand the special power that is associated with these unique moments, then I believe the church and the home have a powerful tool to aid in the discipleship of this next generation of believers.

In order for this thesis-project to be itself a useful marker for the local church, I will devote a chapter investigating Scripture. It is imperative to discover if faith markers are reflected in a biblical and theological context, so that any conclusions drawn will be God-honoring and in alignment with God's work in this world. I hope that what is presented in Chapter Two will show that this specific application of ministry fits into the larger perspective of our Christian faith.

The third Chapter will be devoted to an investigation of the best available literature and resources that have demonstrated a primary degree of scholarship with respect to faith markers. Although there is an exhaustive collection of work, the selection of literature I chose aims to provide the reader with a thorough and big-picture view to situate markers within a faith context. This will allow the reader to see this body of work as a whole, rather than a patchwork of research. The forth Chapter will provide the final avenue of investigation. This is where I help the reader understand the qualitative investigation I undertook to study five exemplar churches that have incorporated faith markers into their church's discipleship strategy.

As stated earlier, I have been a youth pastor for more than 25 years and have watched students and families engage these special moments in ways that solidified their faith. Unfortunately, I have seen many more of these special moments pass without fanfare, lost forever as a potential faith marker that could have helped to alleviate an individual's uncertainty of finding biblical adulthood. This longing has provided hope and motivation to make this thesis-project a critical and useful tool for the development and strengthening of a church's discipleship strategy.

This thesis-project is also personal, as I am a young parent myself guiding my young ones on a path from childhood to adulthood. I see moments pass every day with my children, moments that will not repeat.<sup>10</sup> My personal desire to pass on a maturing faith to my children then complements my ministry goals of expanding a discipleship strategy to include the creation of faith markers. However, the acquisition of biblical

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10. The day this paragraph was rewritten was also my daughter's last day of kindergarten.



faith is by no means a guarantee; it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet, the church and the home have a responsibility to help foster a faith that can be active in the world we live.

### **Framework and Building Blocks**

Clarification of the framework and building blocks create a foundation for this discussion. The primary building block is one of defining the developmental components of childhood and the developmental components of adulthood as two separate and unique stages or statuses.<sup>11</sup> Many assume that these stages are separate, but what really makes them different? Is it due to age or is it the ability to economically support oneself? For some societies these may be true, but for others it may be a combination of interrelated issues and other factors. Significant developmental factors associated with the ascent toward adulthood include biological, cultural, economic, and religious concepts. The developmental transitions that occur with regards to these concepts are usually marked by some informal or formal event. The term that has traditionally communicated this transitional concept is *rite of passage*. The rite of passage idea is commonly used in our language and society. Many people associate a rite of passage with a 'coming-of-age' event; a point in time that suggests an individual is becoming an adult.

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11. See Robert Epstein, *Teen 2.0* (Fresno, CA: Quill Driver, 2010) or see How Adult Are You?, "The Epstein-Dumas Test of Adulthood," <http://www.howadultareyou.com> (accessed October 16, 2014). The (EDTA) measures competency in several categories, such as: love, problem solving, handling responsibility, managing high-risk behaviors, citizenship and more.

My definition of a faith marker shares much similarity with this rite of passage concept. Therefore, to build an argument for this thesis-project, it would be prudent to start with and build upon the framework that Dutch anthropologist Arnold van Gennep developed when he first noticed that many societies participated in various forms of transitional events or rites of passage.<sup>12</sup> A rite of passage is typically comprised of three phases. As shown in Figure 1, a rite of passage commences with a separation, departure, or removal from a particular social status (Status A), continues through a transitional period, and then culminates with the individual's (re)incorporation into a new and unique social status (Status B).

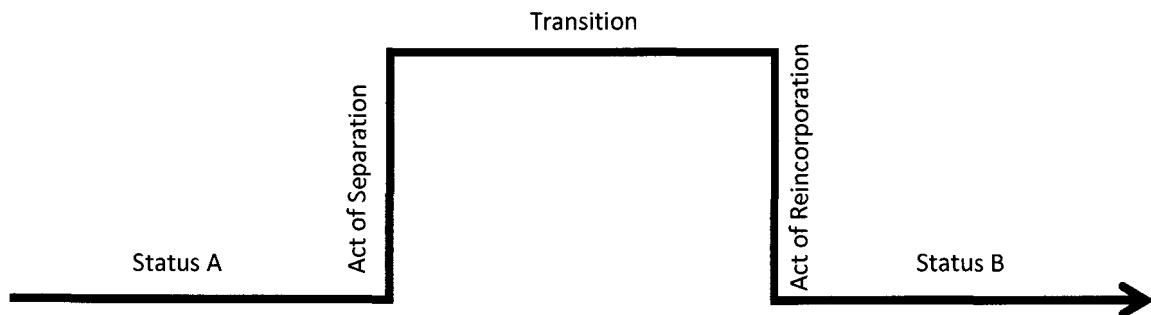


Figure 1. Arnold van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model

To illustrate, many cultures view menarche as a biological rite of passage that ends the childhood of a girl and begins her adulthood as a woman (Figure 2). Thus, the new capacity to reproduce represents a change in biological status for this individual, which has obvious social implications. Additionally, menarche serves as both an act of

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12. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1960), xxv. The concept of rites of passage as a general theory of socialization appears to be first formally articulated in this work.

separation from childhood and as an act of incorporation into adulthood. Therefore, this singular ritual performs the three-fold function of a complete rite of passage event.

However, the community must be careful not to assume that completion of a particular ritual, whether biological, cultural, economic, or religious, automatically translates into an adult status across the board.<sup>13</sup> The experiences of many youth ministers underscore this situation with regards to the teenagers in their ministries. The youth minister may be aware that the student is entering puberty and therefore is becoming biologically capable to produce offspring. However, the observation of other aspects of their lives would indicate they are not an adult.

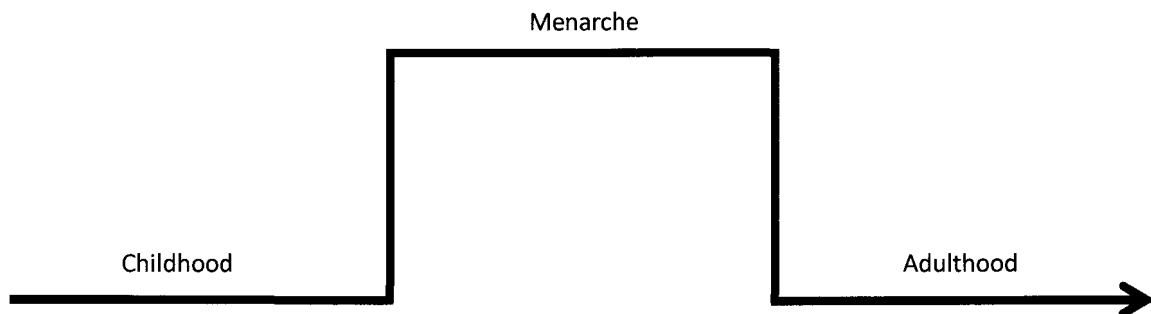


Figure 2. Menarche as a rite of passage.

British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner is often considered one of the leading contributors to anthropology's understanding of *rite of passage*.<sup>14</sup> Whereas van Gennep seemed to have focused on the spatial structure of movement through three phases, it

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13. Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 65. Van Gennep makes a distinction between social puberty and physiological puberty.

14. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1995).

is Turner who viewed the central phase of the passage as a period of *anti-structure*, outside of time and space. According to Turner, there exists an ambiguous position within the transitional stage, something he calls *liminality*, that serves as a vantage point of the *betwixt and between* (Figure 3).<sup>15</sup> One does not necessarily mature or gain advancement in discrete or defined chunks, but there may be the appearance of multiple unstructured positions at any one moment. This potentially explains some of the uncertainty within the in-between state of childhood and adulthood.

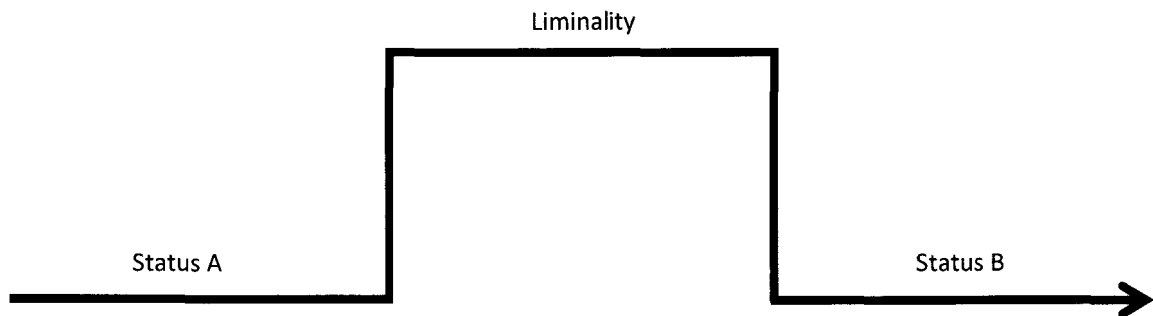


Figure 3. Victor Turner's transition as a period defined by anti-structure.

G. Stanley Hall, an American pioneer in child psychology, first described in 1904 this emerging 'in-between' state as adolescence.<sup>16</sup> For many years, the term *adolescent* became the primary way to describe this in-between, not a child, but not ready to be an

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15. Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites De Passage," *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 4th ed., Edited by. William Lessa and Evon Vogt (New York: Harper Row, 1979), 234-243.

16. "Most historians agree on when adolescences was invented. Credit is usually given to the famed developmental psychologist G. Stanley Hall, who first wrote about adolescence as a stage of life in 1904." Wayne Rice, *Reinventing Youth Ministry [Again]: From Bells and Whistles to Flesh and Blood* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010), 43.

adult period of life.<sup>17</sup> Even though the term adolescent may be insufficient to describe the current complexities of this life span, the term still generally communicates a developing or transitioning period that is situated, in time, between childhood and adulthood. Regardless of how one labels and stratifies this in-between time, there is undoubtedly an *in-between* time and it is difficult to characterize succinctly.

Adolescence appears to be, what might be described as 'drifting.' As a veteran of 25 years of professional youth ministry,<sup>18</sup> I have observed symptoms of this 'drifting' in two phenomena described as age-compression and age-elongation. The former describes adolescent characteristics in the childhood life span and the latter describes adolescent characteristics in the adulthood life span. For example, the struggles and stressors associated with opposite and same-sex relationships, family discord and redefinition, and exposure to extreme forms of culture have drifted into the conversations of elementary-aged kids. On the other end of the spectrum, has '27 become the new 18?'<sup>19</sup> This is a concept that explores the diminishing desire to move out of the home and begin an independent life. Psychology professor Jeffery Arnett speaks of this growing reality for 18- and 19- years-olds, "they leave home..., but most

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17. "Late Middle English (as a noun): via French from Latin adolescent- 'coming to maturity,' from *adolescere*, from *ad-* 'to' + *alescere* 'grow, grow up,' from *alere* 'nourish.' The adjective dates from the late 18th century." Oxford Dictionaries, [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/adolescent](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/adolescent) (accessed February, 24, 2015).

18. The first responsibilities I had for the spiritual formation of a group of teenagers was in 1988. This began a path that led me to several churches in Texas and Oregon in the roles of Youth Pastor, Next Generations Pastor, and Christian Development Pastor.

19. Ann Brenoff, "Adult Kids at Home: How Long is Too Long?" *The Huffington Post*, August 13, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/13/adult-kids-at-home\\_n\\_3749061.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/13/adult-kids-at-home_n_3749061.html) (accessed August 28, 2015).

don't marry, become parents, and find a long term job until at least their late twenties."<sup>20</sup>

The unprecedented uncertainties in the social and spiritual dynamics of maturity are drifting in both amplitude and range with each passing adolescent cohort. These observations are having a profound impact on how churches minister to both the individual and the home.<sup>21</sup> Foundational ideas such as biblical authority and absolute truth seem to be disappearing from the spiritual conversations of traditional church members. The desire to be as inclusive as possible appears to be having an adverse compromise with truth. This combined with the proliferation of blogs, YouTube videos, Facebook postings, Wikipedia, and other social media outlets as 'reliable' sources of information further confounds truth. I believe this is partially responsible for this drift in spiritual belief. The traditionally understood anchors of faith are disappearing into the noise of culture.

What I have observed in my local context has also been noticed on the national scale. Theorists and researchers, such as behaviorist Robert Epstein, have suggested that for the first time in human history, "the turmoil we see during the teen years in modern America is caused by the artificial extension of childhood past puberty."<sup>22</sup> Epstein argues that the increasing amount of restrictions placed on children and

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20. Jeffery Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 3.

21. See Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact when Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009).

22. Robert Epstein, *Teen 2.0: Saving our Children and Families from the Torment of Adolescence* (Fresno, CA: Quill Driver, 2010), 144.

adolescents is “infantilizing” them and the corrective is not freedom, but responsibility.<sup>23</sup>

Other researchers of adolescent psychology argue that the span between childhood and adulthood is showing segmentation. Currently, there is an entire journal devoted to early adolescence which suggests the existence of a late adolescence.<sup>24</sup> Respected youth ministry professor Chap Clark’s groundbreaking work to better understand how adolescents view themselves in society was developed within what has recently been acknowledged as a third distinct phase—*mid-adolescence*. According to Clark, this distinct life span is a creation of an adolescent’s perceived abandonment from the adult community.<sup>25</sup> Clark discovered that in response to this systematic abandonment, the mid-adolescent cohort has developed a “separate and highly structured social system...[a] world beneath,”<sup>26</sup> or as the critically acclaimed writer and youth advocate Patricia Hersch suggests, a “tribe apart.”<sup>27</sup> Adolescents’ feeling of aloneness codifies into an isolated society described by Hersch as a group of peers with their “own values, ethics, rules, worldviews, rites of passage, worries, joys, and momentum.”<sup>28</sup>

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23. Epstein, *Teen 2.0*, 339.

24. The Journal of Early Adolescence (JEA).

25. Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today’s Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 27.

26. Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 44.

27. Patricia Hersch, *A Tribe Apart: A Journey into the Heart of American Adolescence* (New York: Random House, 1998), 21.

28. Hersch, *A Tribe Apart*, 21.

Even after the journey through adolescence, there is the belief that the road to adulthood must travel through yet another distinct life span. Jeffery Arnett believes that the modern social dynamics of increased personal independence allows for a unique segment of “emerging adulthood.”<sup>29</sup> Emerging adulthood is characterized as an age of identity exploration, especially in love and work; an age of instability; an age of self-focus; an age of feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood; and an age of possibilities.<sup>30</sup> Even though Arnett does not reckon this stage as “an extended adolescence,”<sup>31</sup> it is, however, not adulthood. Arnett would agree that adulthood for young people has drifted farther away from childhood.

The adage “adolescence begins in biology and ends in culture” reflects van Gennep’s understanding that transitions through life spans are socially defined. The public is what makes or defines culture.<sup>32</sup> Because teenagers are growing up and going through a period of ambiguity, they are, as youth culture expert Walt Mueller describes, “incredibly vulnerable” to the shaping values of culture.<sup>33</sup> Beyond the social changes, there are also economic and technological factors at work.

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29. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 4.

30. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 8.

31. Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood*, 4.

32. Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 38.

33. Walt Mueller, *The Space Between: A Parent’s Guide to Teenage Development* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 18.



The haste to “have it your way” communicates individualism and immediacy.<sup>34</sup> This quest for maximum reward with minimum effort is misdirecting adolescents into mindsets defined by paths of least resistance and entitlement.<sup>35</sup> Sociology professor James Cote suggests that, “the material conditions of existence have been continuously altered over the past few centuries as capitalism has intruded more and more into how people subsist and experience their world.”<sup>36</sup> Reincorporation into society is central for a transition through a life span. Cote’s warning of culture’s desire for individuality is proving to be a barrier for the achievement of adulthood status.

Outside of the breakdown of the nuclear family, the quest to consume and regulate excessive amounts of information,<sup>37</sup> driven by technological advancements, may be the greatest contributor to the uncertainty plaguing the adolescent years. Ironically, blogger Tim Challies, who regularly comments on issues of digital influence, believes technology is “changing our very conception of truth.”<sup>38</sup> Information is accumulating at astonishing rates. A study submitted in 2012 by W. Russell Neuman, Yong Jin Park, and Elliot Panek to the International Journal of Communication suggested

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34. Burger King, “Be Your Way at Burger King Restaurants,” May 20, 2014, <http://www.bk.com/news-press/be-your-way-burger-king%C2%AE-restaurants> (accessed February 24, 2015). Interestingly this popular slogan is being updated with a more postmodern version, “Be Your Way.”

35. James Cote, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York: University Press, 2000), 34.

36. Cote, *Arrested Adulthood*, 3.

37. “Infobesity.” *MacMillian Dictionary*, <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/buzzword/entries/infobesity.html> (accessed February 24, 2015).

38. Tim Challies, *The Next Story: Life and Faith after the Digital Explosion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 168.

that for every minute an individual is available to consume information, there are a thousand minutes of mediated content available.<sup>39</sup> This 'information explosion,'<sup>40</sup> by sheer volume, is replacing time-tested wisdom as a guide to truth. The result is a false belief that informational knowledge will heal the ills of society and improve lives.<sup>41</sup> Yet in this attempt to have technology do the heavy lifting of sifting through information, we have been warned by communication theorists such as Marshall McLuhan and John Dyer that it may be this reliance on technology that is transforming our ability to think.<sup>42</sup> Having one thousand minutes of information available for every minute of our time is beyond comprehension which can contribute to all sorts of stressors.<sup>43</sup> This is similar to my mother who longs for the day of having only two or three choices of fertilizer for her landscaping needs. Now when she enters Home Depot, she has paralysis by analysis and gets frustrated by having too many choices in the decision-making process. This is one

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39 W. Russell Neuman, Yong Jin Park, Elliot Panek, "Tracking the Flow of Information into the Home: An Empirical Assessment of the Digital Revolution in the United States, 1960-2005," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012) 1022-1041.

40. Gil Press, "A Very Short History of Big Data," *Forbes*, May 9, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/gilpress/2013/05/09/a-very-short-history-of-big-data/> (accessed June 11, 2015).

41. Challies, *The Next Story*, 141.

42. See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 35. John Dyer, *From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal, 2011), 36.

43. "[T]he media stress[es] children by giving them too much information too fast or by giving them information for which they are not intellectually or emotionally ready." David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing up Too Fast Too Soon*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2001), 183.

of the reasons why Erik Ericson suggested that teenagers find or make a *moratorium*, a time of reduced distraction to sort out gained information.<sup>44</sup>

As mentioned earlier, measuring maturity is not defined in discrete or consistent expressions. Complicating matters is the drift in adolescence, which is characterized by an increased uncertainty of societal parameters, economic factors, and the acceleration of technological advancements. I agree with Kara Powell, Executive Director of the Fuller Youth Institute, that the world of an adolescent is being redefined not as a life span where uncertainty resolves, but a life span with rampant uncertainty and unexpressed doubt remain (Figure 4).<sup>45</sup> This is evidenced by the erosion of various unique indicators that once signaled the adolescent's immaturity and relation to community.<sup>46</sup> Child psychologist David Elkind suggests the adolescent interpretation of clothing style, activities, or media access are "vanishing" as unique markers of this life stage.<sup>47</sup> He further believes that having a system in place that strategically structures markers will accomplish two things:

First, markers help adults limit the demands for maturity, the stressors, that they place upon adolescents. Second, because they offer young people rules, limits, and prohibitions that they can internalize, markers are a source of stress-coping

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44. Erik Erikson and Joan Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version with New Chapters on the Ninth Stage of Development* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 75.

45. "Doubt in and of itself isn't toxic. It's the unexpressed doubt that becomes toxic." Kara E. Powell, "Steve Jobs, Back to School, and Why doubt belongs in your Youth Group Curriculum," Christianity Today, September 2012, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2012/september/steve-jobs-back-to-school-and-why-doubt-belongs-in-your.html> (accessed July 20, 2015).

46. David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capp Press, 1998), 111.

47. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 134.

mechanisms. Internalized rules, limits, and prohibitions give young people the means to make age-appropriate decision and choices.<sup>48</sup>

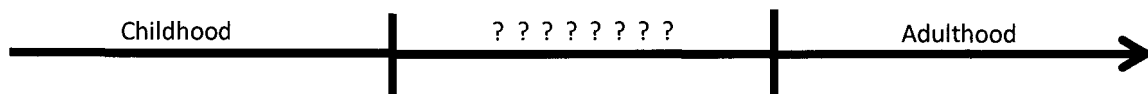


Figure 4. The adolescent life stage as marked by uncertainty.

### The Local Church

It is these environmental influences that accompany our adolescents into our churches and ministries. One's identity can still become reconciled through the work of Christ. However, as Kenda Dean, the Princeton Seminary Professor of Youth, Church and Culture, describes when a church community fails in its missional objectives of making and maturing disciples, a faulty faith forms and we are left with an "unholy residue."<sup>49</sup> Recent research performed by Christian Smith of the National Study of Youth and Religion demonstrated that the contemporary faith one has entering into adulthood is an immature faith at best, an imposter faith at worst.<sup>50</sup> To slow down this expansive aspect of adolescence drift, it will become important for the Christian faith community to develop consistent practices that recognize various moments or milestones in the life

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48. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 113.

49. Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: University Press, 2010), 104.

50. Christian Smith and Melinda Denton, *Soul Searching, The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162. The basic tenets of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism are: (1) A god exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on earth. (2) God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions. (3) The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself. (4) God is not involved in my life except when I need God to resolve a problem. (5) Good people go to heaven when they die.

of the adolescent which, coordinated with a spiritual application, will in turn create a faith marker to help anchor their developing identity and purpose as one created in the image of God. If these moments are left unattended, they will become as ritual expert Ronald Grimes suggests, “spiritual sinkholes...which hungry ghosts, house greedy personifications of unfinished business, hover.”<sup>51</sup>

These are the concerns that are leading the Next Generation Ministry team at FBCBeaverton to adopt a comprehensive structure that coordinates significant spiritual or cultural milestones with a spiritual truth for the faith stabilization of the emerging generation. Of paramount emphasis is conversion, the identifying mark of a Christ follower and the central anchor of spiritual formation. Conversion begins with repentance and then regenerates the person through the process of sanctification.<sup>52</sup> This spiritual reformation of one’s identity is not only bound to Christ, but is also bound to the church. According to the president of Ambrose University and Seminary, Gordon Smith, “conversion is [the] initiation into a growing and maturing community, an interdependent network of individuals who in love serve one another and who together, in mutual dependence, grow in faith, hope, and love.”<sup>53</sup> The importance of a church’s group life strategy cannot be underestimated.

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51. Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeping into the Bone: Reinventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley, CA: University California Press, 2000), 6.

52. Southern Baptist Convention, “The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message,” <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp> (accessed March 2, 2015).

53. See Gordon T. Smith, *Transforming Conversion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010).

This relationship to Jesus Christ and connectedness to his church is what our Next Generation team desires for our children and students. However, many of us in ministry have struggled with guiding a student through a faith conversion. We know that our children and students are having genuine faith convictions.<sup>54</sup> But we also know that there are kids seeking an adult's approval. We know there are emotional nights at youth camps which produce confusing thoughts about repentance. We know there are kids that may respond to a faith conversion as a means to reduce pressure exerted at home. Our objective, as people ministering to these students and their parents, is to help them identify genuine faith, something that is a result of the Holy Spirit at work, not the work of a cultural event. Although conversion does not always occur during adolescence, it remains the keystone for all other special moments or milestones.

Any milestone, that a child or adolescent approaches can have a spiritual application.<sup>55</sup> There does not need to be a sacred versus secular split.<sup>56</sup> The church should be the primary equippers to help adolescents see God's hand in all aspects of

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54. "It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." See "Article IV: Salvation," Southern Baptist Convention, "The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message," <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp> (accessed March 2, 2015).

55. "[Believers are] called to be culturally savvy Christians, who are serious about faith, savvy about faith and culture, and skilled at fulfilling our calling to be a loving, transforming presence in the world." Dick Straub, *The Culturally Savvy Christian: A Manifesto for Deepening Faith and Enriching Popular Culture in an Age of Christianity-Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), xv.

56. "Some of the rituals connected with our transitions could be classified as secular, and some as sacred; such a division, however, has been a modern distinction. Because religious practice,..., the church is ever the primary guardian of both the ceremony and the content of the major life transitions in our lives, the church must monitor and evaluate both the passages and the rituals which attend them. Consciously or unconsciously, religion in general and the church specifically is constantly adjusting its involvement in our stages and transitions." W. Wayne Price, *The Church and the Rites of Passage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1989), 7-8.

life, not just the activity inside the walls of the church.<sup>57</sup> Famed Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper once stated, “there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”<sup>58</sup> Surely this includes the mundane and memorable adolescent cultural milestones, such as getting braces, obtaining a worker’s permit, or receiving the responsibility to vote in the city elections. Engaging these rites of passages within a framework that honors God will help to remove the questions associated with the uncertainty of adolescence and replace them with anchors that stabilize the transition of faith within a chaotic world (Figure 5).<sup>59</sup>

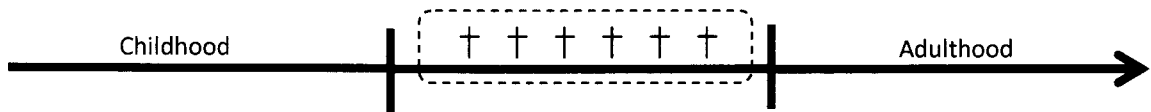


Figure 5. The adolescent life stage marked by faith anchors.

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57. Nancy Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2010), 272.

58. Abraham Kuyper: *A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

59. The more complicated the adolescent stage of life should require an equal response from the church and family in developing intentional faith-anchor points along the adolescent journey. These points will serve within the function of a structured understanding of the rite of passage process. As Arnold van Gennep observed in his understanding of these rites of passage, these celebrations must serve as an avenue “whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined.” van Gennep, *Rites of Passages*, 59. Given the chaotic understanding of this life span, a series of defined transitional events may be the catalyst to better aid the church and family in the transfer of one’s faith commitment into adulthood.

## **Project Design and Outcomes**

The qualitative goal of the research for this thesis-project is to discover if the celebration of developmentally appropriate transition events can serve as catalysts for positive adolescent spiritual development. Such events could include, but are not limited to: a transition from elementary school to middle school, obtaining a driver's license, salvation and baptism, or making an abstinence pledge. There are some American churches that have addressed these issues within their discipleship pathway and have documented success in the use of a rite of passage concept to mark such milestones. In order to corroborate this argument, I have sought out five exemplar churches that are known for their integration of various rites of passage events within their educational or catechetical structure. The focus of the in-depth interviews with each church was based on the following themes:

1. Identification and evaluation of specific transition stages associated with family life or adolescence that were celebrated by some form of rite of passage event.
2. Identification and evaluation regarding both the church's and family's role in the production of the rite of passage event.
3. Feedback regarding the participant's ability to be recognized with a strengthened spiritual status or maturity.
4. Recommendations for the development of a rite of passage plan that can serve as a model for other faith organizations.
5. General background information to determine if there exist any anomalies: such as an unusual percentage of homeschooled students versus public school students.

From this research, conclusions were drawn that probed the relationship between the spiritual application of a rite of passage experience and positive faith



transition through adolescence. These conclusions then provided the key anchoring points for the development of a 'Faith Pathway' for FBCBeaverton's Next Generation Ministry's discipleship strategy. A faith pathway includes the efforts of both the family and the church, and that faith development is seldom a result of a singular event, but a journey over time. The church and the home have a responsibility to develop and engage in a strategy that identifies special moments to be spiritually informed as a faith stabilizing rite of passage benefitting the individual's maturity while granting them access to the adult community in their church.<sup>60</sup>

There will be many firsts and lasts for today's adolescent. There will be the last day of elementary school and the first day of middle school. There will be the day a driver's license is granted or a checking account opened. There will be a day where a faith conversion is marked by a baptism or a loss of a loved one marked by a funeral. There may be a high school graduation or an enlistment into the armed services. All of these events mark a change in social status within the life of an adolescent. Each of these events is an opportunity for the home and the church to provide an anchor for the adolescent's developing spiritual maturity. In so doing, a celebration of a milestone embeds a reminder of the journey traveled, their present status, and as Elkind says, a "[beacon] for the future."<sup>61</sup> These events can pass along the budding faith commitment of childhood into a grounded faith commitment within adulthood. In doing so, the

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60. Kara Powell, *Sticky Faith Youth Worker Edition*, 62. In the Sticky Faith Initiative led by Kara Powell, she warns that the church family must recognize the change in status proffered by a rite of passage.

61. Elkind, *All Grown Up*, 113.

church, the family, and the initiated will be honoring God through the intentional discipleship of the next generation of believers.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO RITES OF PASSAGE**

To enact any kind of rite is to perform, but to enact a rite of passage is also to transform.

—Ronald Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

—1 Corinthians 13:11

#### **Humankind and Rites of Passages**

With each new rotation of the earth and each new revolution around the sun, we are constantly reminded that our earthly days are numbered, that our temporal lives have a beginning and an end. Time provides a construct to understand the ordering of birth, life, and death, to understand the abstraction of before, during, and after. At every point in history is a moment that is understood by its past and its capacity to shape the future. Many of these moments pass without significance. However, some moments are marked by a considerable occasion sparking a major change in how individuals or societies understand themselves and each other. The beauty of a rite of

passage experience is when these moments produce a movement in growth and maturity.

An appropriate place to build a theological and biblical context for these significant moments as a rite of passage event is to begin with an understanding of the transformational nature of the Grand Narrative of Scripture. Creation, Fall, and Restoration suggest a correspondence to the separation, transition, and incorporation scheme of a rite of passage as first articulated by Arnold van Gennep.<sup>1</sup> This scheme can serve as a template to demarcate a cosmic *before, during, and after* throughout human history. Van Gennep's model was anthropological in nature and can serve as a guide to understand the radically different and unique ways humankind and Creator relate at each phase of this cosmic rite of passage (Figure 6).<sup>2</sup>

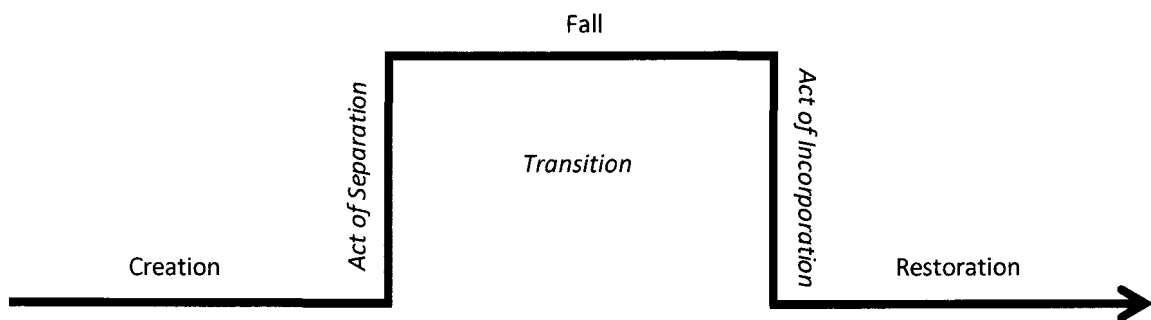


Figure 6. Cosmic Rite of Passage

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1. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1960).

2. Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 296. Literature provides many examples of illustrating van Gennep's rites of passage scheme. The model represented in Figure 6 and following reflects Paul Hiebert's version.

## Created in the Image of God

It was God and only God that formed the heavens and the earth, separated the waters from the air and filled the land with living birds, plants, and animals. The understanding that God created everything from nothing, *creatio ex nihilo*, goes beyond scientific proof or disproof; it can only be embraced by faith.<sup>3</sup> The writer of Hebrews states "...that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."<sup>4</sup> A dualistic worldview, then, has no room within this exclusive claim.<sup>5</sup> Our universe and everything within it was created by God for the glorification of God. It was God and God alone who pronounced it to be good.<sup>6</sup> So it is "by faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command."<sup>7</sup>

The story of creation sees its climax towards the end of the first chapter of Genesis as God introduces the second actor humanity. From a Christian perspective, 'likeness to God,' is the profound description concerning the nature of man. Genesis 1:26, 27 teach that God created male and female in his own likeness or image. It is this relationship between God and humanity about which the entire biblical account is written. There was something special, something unique, and something natural about man's identity and his relationship with God. Man was in a position to manage the living

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3. J.P., "The Biblical Doctrine," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 239.

4. Heb 11:3b.

5. "The fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people make about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives." Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldview: An anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 15.

6. At the conclusion of each day, God finished with the statement, "it was good."

7. Heb 11:3a.

things, cultivate the land, or “do culture.”<sup>8</sup> Man was with purpose and for purpose. It was not an accident, nor was it by chance, nor was it a consequential result out of God’s control. Humankind was created in the image or likeness of the Creator. “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he create them.”<sup>9</sup>

### The Before

The very essence of this cosmic rite of passage is an unfettered relationship with God. It is the very center, the heart of the gospel.<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew word *shalom* may be the best descriptor, for its intent is right relationship with God, involving “worship, holiness, and obedience.”<sup>11</sup> The modern day concept implies this history:

The concept of *shalom* (the Hebrew word usually translated “peace” in the Bible) implies much more than mere absence of conflict. At root *shalom* means wholeness or well-being, and the word can be used in both religious and secular contexts. It is also used as a general greeting (Judg. 6:23; Ezra 5:7; Dan. 4:1) and as a farewell (Exod. 4:18; 2 Sam. 15:9). In those cases, it seems to express good wishes for the people addressed and friendly intentions on the part of the speaker. The term comes to mean peace in the more conventional sense of the English word by extension; *shalom* implies absence of conflict due to an absence of those things that cause conflict.<sup>12</sup>

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8. William Romanowski, *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 46.

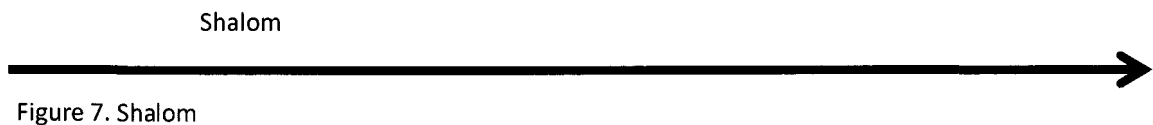
9. Gen 1:27.

10. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 303.

11. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 303.

12. Joanna Dewey, “Peace,” ed. Mark Allan Powell, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary: Revised and Updated* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 763.

It is this wholeness, well-being, or absence of conflict that characterizes an existence requiring no need for transformation. It is a status of relationship with God intended for eternity, thus negating any need for a rite of passage event to alter this relationship. Van Gennep's model would be reduced to a single status extending forever (Figure 7).



Shalom was not challenged with the creation of Adam and Eve. In fact, shalom was created for Adam and Eve and was enjoyed by them following their arrival to the Garden of Eden. Moreover, shalom existed because Adam and Eve were fulfilling their purposes and they had a whole relationship with God. Their actions reflected their assignment,<sup>13</sup> as well as their identity as “in the image of God” beings.<sup>14</sup>

### The Transition

However, this period of shalom did not last, as recorded in the third chapter of Genesis. The *Fall* became the second significant marker within recorded Scripture. Yet it was humankind's first marker that would separate time into a before and an after. All rites of passages are marked by an act that creates a separation from the previous status. Adam fell from grace when he yielded to the temptation of Satan and when, with

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13. Gen 1:28-29.

14. Gen 1:27.

Eve, he ate what was forbidden.<sup>15</sup> This single act disrupted shalom and brought about an immediate change in their relationship with God (Figure 8). In an instant, humanity stepped across a threshold into a new period of time marking a transition from a state of moral innocence and favor with God to a state of alienation and death.

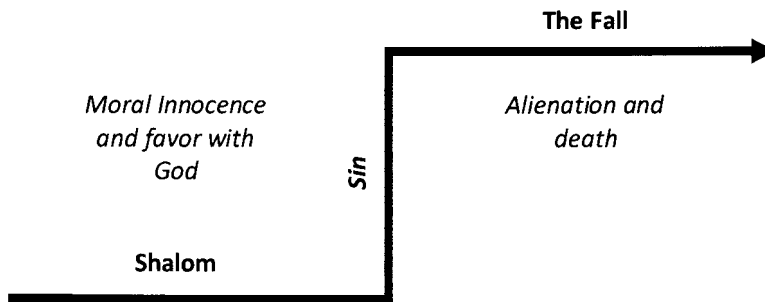


Figure 8. Sin as the act of separation between shalom and the fall.

Thus the Grand Narrative of Scripture begins to parallel the threefold scheme of van Gennep's rites of passage structure. Sin disrupts the original environment of shalom and initiates the separation from a previous status. Humanity is no longer able to clearly view itself as the created image of God. The image of God is now marred, unable to experience or even understand shalom. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden has more to do with separation from God, than it does with their geographical location. In this new state, humans lost their purpose and identity.

After the Fall, Adam and his descendants began to seek ways to manage their newly formed identity apart from God. The consequences of the Fall infected all of creation. However, all was not lost. The possibility of a Savior was foreshadowed even

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15. Gen 3: 1-24 describes the first time Adam and Eve disobeyed God.



before the curse was pronounced.<sup>16</sup> God will inaugurate a salvation movement so that through the work of God, humankind's individual and corporate identity can be renewed. Within the context of a rite of passage, sin was humankind's act of separation, exchanging shalom for a fallen status, a status that is now hopeful for an act that will reincorporate them back into restoration with God (Figure 9). It is within this fallen state that humankind, without direct access to God, begins to create and enact various rituals as a means to achieve restoration and end their sin-defined identity.

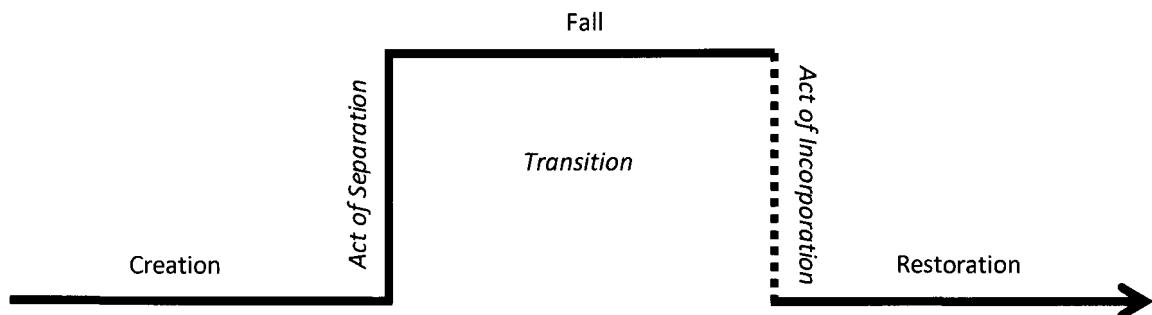


Figure 9. An act of incorporation required to complete the cosmic rite of passage.

It is within this cosmic transition that God enters into a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. It is within this cosmic transition that God will deliver the Hebrew slaves out of bondage into the Promised Land, and it is within this cosmic transition that God will allow his people to experience exile. Each of these dramatic events can claim characterization within van Gennep's model both as a complete rite of passage for God's chosen people and as a cosmic act foreshadowing God's final act to bring about restoration for all people.

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16. Gen 3:15.

## The Covenant with Abraham

God did not stop loving his creation when Adam and Eve sinned. Instead God initiated a process of salvation and reconciliation. The first pertinent act of God to begin this process is through a covenant he made with Abraham and consequently his descendants. "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."<sup>17</sup> The covenant established permanency for a wandering people as reflected in two stages. "From Abraham's perspective, in the relatively near future his descendants would possess a land given them by God. But in the more distant future was the prospect of a universal blessing, the culmination of God's work in the world."<sup>18</sup>

The spiritual tone of this covenant was also expressed through a personal rite of passage (Gen 17: 4b-5, as Abram receives a new name) as well as a national rite of passage (Gen 17: 6, the predicted rise of a monarchic nationhood). It is when the covenant is expressed in the sign of circumcision (Gen 17: 9-14), that it becomes the symbol of a divine promise for "divinely nominated recipients."<sup>19</sup> The special moment of the circumcision coordinated with the spiritual application of the promise creates a faith

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17. Gen 12:3b, 17:7.

18. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 533.

19. J. A. Motyer, "Circumcision," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 204.

marker that signified the “gracious movement of God to man, and only derivatively, ... the consecration of man to God.”<sup>20</sup>

The covenant of circumcision operates on the principle of the spiritual union of the household in its head. The covenant is ‘between me and you and your descendants after you’ (Gn. 17:7), and vv. 26–27 notably expresses the same truth: ‘Abraham ... Ishmael ... and all the men of his house ... were circumcised with him.’ Thus, from its inception, infant circumcision was the distinctive Israelite custom, not derived from Egyptian or other practice, and contrasting sharply with the puberty rites of other nations: the latter point to social acknowledgment of adult status, the former to a status before God and a prevenience of divine grace.<sup>21</sup>

Circumcision as a step towards redemption was thus an expectation of outward obedience, “a biblical constant.”<sup>22</sup> Even within a world where circumcision was practiced for varying reasons, mostly associated with fertility rituals of adulthood, this seal of the Abrahamic covenant provided a permanent reminder of God’s covenant promises. The hygienic act of circumcision, “symbolized the need for cleansing if the holy God was to enter into relationship with an unholy people.”<sup>23</sup>

In this respect, circumcision involves the idea of consecration to God, but not as its essence. Circumcision embodies and applies covenant promises and summons to a life of covenant obedience. The blood which is shed in circumcision does not express the desperate lengths to which a man must go in self-consecration, but the costly demand which God makes of those whom he calls to himself and marks with the sign of his covenant.<sup>24</sup>

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20. Motyer, “Circumcision,” 204.

21. Motyer, “Circumcision,” 204.

22. Motyer, “Circumcision,” 204. Jer 4:4, Rom 2:25-29; cf. Acts 15:5; Gal 5:3.

23. Elwell and Beitzel, 463.

24. Motyer, “Circumcision,” 205.

Circumcision became the specific act that identified a covenantal promise for God's people. It was an act that physically demonstrated a person set apart with a contrasting new identity or social status (Figure 10).<sup>25</sup> The spiritual and physical significance of this status change was so closely related to God's covenant promise that "the rite itself could be termed the 'covenant' (Gen 17:10; Acts 7:8)."<sup>26</sup> At times this leads to the conflation of the event and the accompanying symbolism, because the act could be removed from the realm of spiritual significances and conferred as simply a societal etiquette.

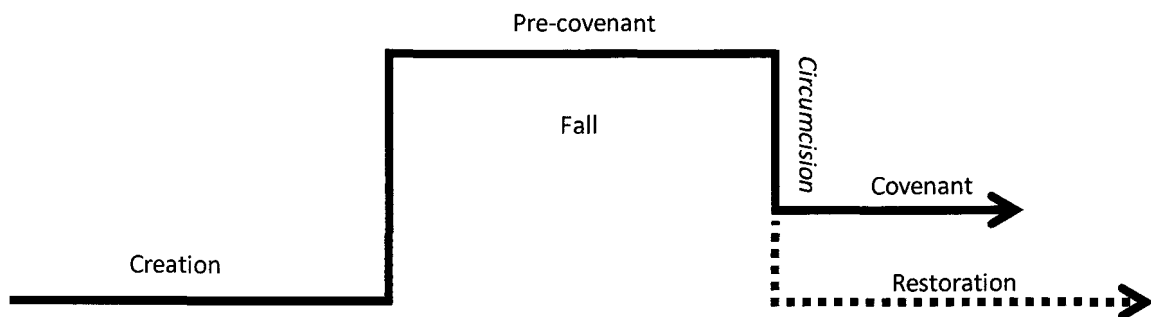


Figure 10. Circumcision as an act of incorporation into the Abrahamic Covenant.

## The Exodus

The magnitude of the Exodus was profound, as numerous references to this event are scattered throughout Scripture.<sup>27</sup> The prominence of the journey "turns the

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25. Neither the covenant nor its associated act of circumcision provided a total means to restore the creation lost. Therefore the illustration portrays the act of incorporation and the subsequent status as partial.

26. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 462.

27. Such as: 1 Kgs 6:1; Ps 105, 106, 114, 136; I Cor 5:7, 10:1 Acts 7:36; Heb 11:27-29.

experience of the Israelite people in the wilderness into a story of pilgrimage, which functions as a rite of passage.”<sup>28</sup> In his commentary on Exodus, Thomas Dozeman sees the three phases of a rite of passage providing the framework for interpreting the three-part structure of salvation history: the Exodus from Egypt as the act of separation; the wilderness journey represents a temporary transitional state; and the Promised Land represents the incorporation into a new social and religious structure (Figure 11).<sup>29</sup>

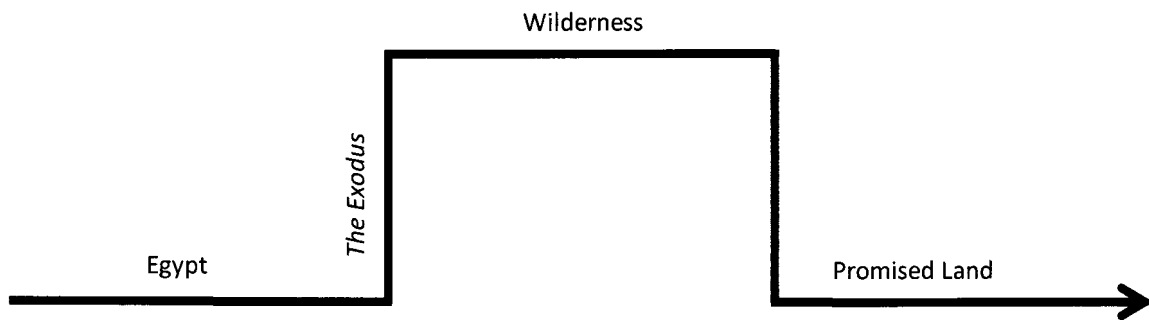


Figure 11. The Exodus as a rite of passage.

Although the physical aspect of the journey could have been completed in a matter of days, it was the religious aspect of the experience that required decades to complete. The Hebrew people had just walked through a miracle; the years of stubbornness would not be overcome as quickly. Shortly after crossing the Red Sea, the leader of the Exodus began to hear the complaints of the people:

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There

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28. Thomas B. Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 347.

29. Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus*, 347-8.

we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.’<sup>30</sup>

These are the complaints that by nature would be typical for any person or group of people to exercise when their normalcy, their way of living, albeit a bad one marked by slavery, is replaced with uncertainty.

The nomadic nature of the Israelites’ camps along the wilderness journey is an important thematic development for the continuation of the story in the book of Exodus. The ambiguity of this wandering differs from both the social structure of Egyptian slavery and the social structure that will develop in Canaan. In fact, this entire wilderness period is marked by a constant development of new guidelines for relating to others and relating to God. They must also learn to live with the consequences. As Wartburg Seminary professor Ann Fritschel states, “obedience is no longer enforced by oppressive powers but is a free choice each person must make.”<sup>31</sup> This is consistent with a transitional stage within a rite of passage experience, where there exists trial and testing in regards to a creation of a new community or society. God is forming a new structure while the people are yearning for the old security. They are caught between their history and God’s future:

The wilderness journey describes Israelites initiation into a life with Yahweh. The stories explore the themes of divine guidance and care and the need for the people to have faith in Moses and in Yahweh. Individual stories describe the trials and tests of Israelite people and the structure of their new communal life after their rescue from the Egyptian oppression. Nature plays an important role

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30. Exod 16:2–3.

31. Ann Fritschel, “Exodus as an Alternative Social Paradigm,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 41:1 (February 2014), 35-38.

in the rite of passage. Its forces, however, are no longer weapons of war but resources for nurture and care. Yahweh decontaminates diseased water (15:22-26), rains down food from heaven (Chap 16), and coaxes water from a rock to keep the Israelites alive in the desert (17:1-7).<sup>32</sup>

These events call for a radical trust in God, positioning their identity in a heavenly master. These were necessary tests “to see whether [the Israelites] would become the covenant people of God.”<sup>33</sup> The accompanying faith of the Israelites should “not [be] assumed in Exodus, it must be acquired through their rite of passage in the wilderness journey,”<sup>34</sup> a 40-year journey that ends at the threshold of the Promised Land with only two former slaves to lead a new nation.<sup>35</sup>

This motif of divine deliverance from Egyptian slavery became etched indelibly upon the Hebrew mind, particularly since it was reinforced each year by the memorial of the Passover meal (Ex 12:12–14, 29). At each celebration thereafter the Hebrews were made aware that they had once been captives, but by the provision and power of God they were now free people, favored with his choice as an elect nation and a holy priesthood (Deut 26:19).<sup>36</sup> As time marched on and when another trial emerged, the Hebrew people were able to look back into that historical event as a marker of God’s faithfulness for a future liberation.

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32. Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus*, 348.

33. Fritschel, “Exodus as an Alternative Social Paradigm,” 37.

34. Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus*, 349.

35. Fritschel, “Exodus as an Alternative Social Paradigm,” 37. This process to exchange for a new identity proved to be extremely difficult, as there were only two former slaves that made it to the Promise Land.

36. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 746.

## Exile as Divinely Ordained Transition

Many times crisis serves as catalyst for change. Of the many troubles God's people experienced, maybe none presented greater danger than the Exile. It challenged their understanding of who God was and of their special relationship to him. The God who covenanted with Abraham and gave his people an identity, the God who delivered them from bondage and gave his people the law was now a God that has seemingly disappeared and abandoned his people. Battles among nations in ancient times were thought of as reflecting a parallel warfare among the gods. When Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple vessels seized, "many [of the people would have] concluded that... Babylonia's god, had proved himself stronger than Judah's God.<sup>37</sup> The gods in heaven would move from one battle to the next.

The prophet Jeremiah, as well as other prophets,<sup>38</sup> tried to speak hope into the people, saying that after 70 years of captivity, God would return them home and restore their livelihood.<sup>39</sup> In the meantime, God would use Babylon as an agent for humility and discipline. Those that were unable to stand fast would become absorbed into Babylonian culture; however, those that would stand in faithful obedience would one day indeed return and rebuild the temple and Jerusalem.

In essence, the Babylonian exile served as a divinely appointed transition. Evident among God's people was unfaithfulness, idolatry, and a trust in the sustenance generated by their own hands and not God's provision. This required a passage of

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37. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 734.

38. See Hos 1:10-11 for example.

39. Jer 29:10, 14.



independence from God, through this exilic season of history into a new status anchored by dependence in God (Figure 12).

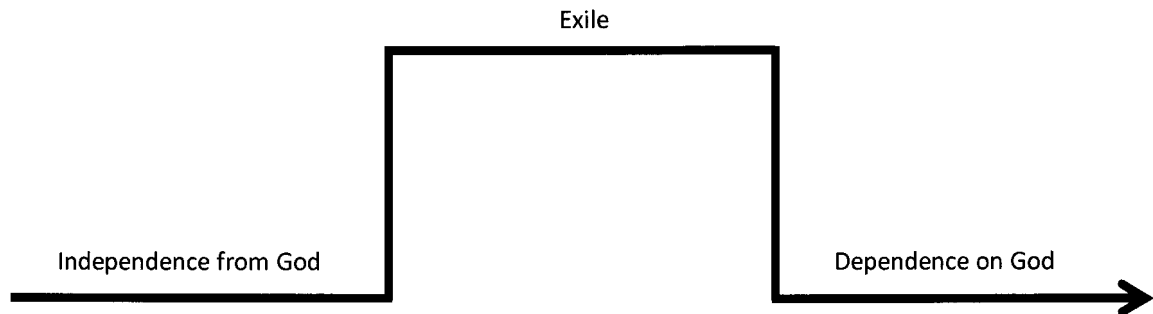


Figure 12. Exile as divinely ordained liminality.

Additionally, this period of exile served as a way to unify its people in religious terms rather than political terms. National life came to an end; the Jews were gradually scattered throughout the ancient world and became identified with a religion and a tradition rather than a nation.<sup>40</sup> It was “during the exile an ‘Israelite’ came to be called a ‘Jew,’ and the idealization of Zion began among the people.”<sup>41</sup>

This transition out of exile into a new status was marked by both a religious identity and a dependence on God:

The prophets spoke of the Babylonian exile as divine retribution and judgment for Judah’s rejection of their message and for persistence in sin and idolatry. If this judgment were accepted, it would eventually lead to restoration and a revelation of divine love for Israel (Is 54:9, 10; Jer 31:3–6). Out of the experience would come a new covenant (Jer 31:31–34). The exile brought a more profound comprehension of the Law and the prophets. There came also a deeper understanding of God’s universality and sovereignty. The exile is one of the primary historical incidents upon

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40. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 734.

41. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 734.

which the hope for the Messiah's coming was established.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Image Restored**

The loss of an unimpeded relationship with God had a stranglehold on the old creation. Within this cosmic transitional period of time far removed from shalom, God used the experiences of the Covenant with Abraham, the Exodus, and the Exile as a means for his people to identify with their Creator, as an *act to reincorporate* his people back into a relationship with Him. God's final covenant was demonstrated through Jesus Christ, as belief in his death, burial, and resurrection provided the justification for humankind's eternal salvation.<sup>43</sup>

This rite of passage pattern is noticed in various New Testaments passages, such as 2 Corinthians when Paul states, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"<sup>44</sup> (Figure 13) Or as van Gennep would translate, there is no reincorporation into the family of God as a new creation without the transitional atoning work of Jesus Christ. Man was now provided with an act of incorporation that was more than just a means to rectify their inadequate relationship with God; humanity now was offered the opportunity to have their image completely restored through Christ.<sup>45</sup>

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42. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 734.

43. Eph 1:7a, 1 Cor 15:3b-4.

44. 2 Cor 5:17.

45. Charles La Shure, "About: What is Liminality," <http://www.liminality.org/about/whatislminality/> (accessed February 17, 2015). The salvation-granting

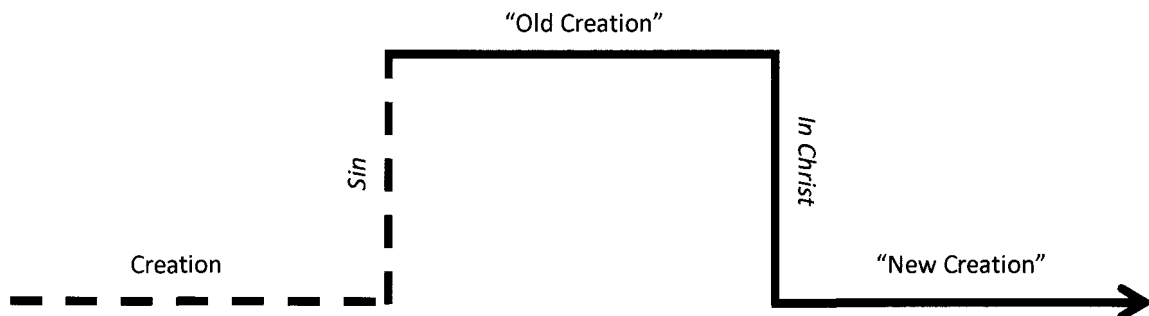


Figure 13. In Christ, the old creation has been made new.

### Jesus and Rites of Passage

Jesus' public ministry was three years of expansive work which ignited a movement: the beginnings of the church that is still standing today. However, curiosity of the three decades of Jesus' life leading up to his public ministry is more absurd speculation than account.<sup>46</sup> Fortunately, what is discovered through Scripture is adequate enough to shed light on the importance of Jesus' family and integration into his local community. Readers of the Gospels have come to learn about Jesus' birth and naming, his first encounter with the temple, his baptism by John, and the temptations that followed in the wilderness. Each of these events provides a biblical model for the family and the church as a faith stabilizing agent.

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work of God through Jesus Christ would shift the person, who is made into a new image in Christ, into another transitional state that is eternal in status with God but temporarily situated on earth awaiting a future glorification on the new earth. Conversion, by trusting in Christ, becomes the act of incorporation into an 'already-not-yet' nature of salvation. Referring this new status as both a temporary and final stage within the van Gennep framework can be troubling to some.

46. The Infancy Gospel of Thomas, a Gnostic and apocryphal writing possibly dating to the middle of the second century, tries to quench the thirst for those curious of the silent years of Jesus' life, roughly those between ages five to 12. Here Jesus is seen as an arrogant and crude, not unlike other children approaching adulthood.

## The Name of Jesus

In modern times, soon to be parents spend a great deal of time thinking about the naming of their child. Sometimes one or both parents have settled on a name long before they even met their spouse. Sometimes a name is chosen from a shared experience between the parents. Sometimes a name is chosen because it is the same name of a dear family member or friend. Sometimes a name will be chosen due to its eccentricity, possibly to demonstrate their desire to maintain a unique standing in culture. Regardless of what the resulting name of the child may be, it is the parents who provide the name, a name that is not a random label to last a lifetime. These names are selected to create or reflect the identity of the child.

In ancient times, a name signified one's identity or change in their social status.<sup>47</sup> The name was more than arbitrary; rather it aimed to describe the person characteristically. Although contemporary names in American society may have lost a little bit of the traditional sense of indicated purpose, there still exists importance in the act for the child and the parent. A name given with meaningful intent has the power to leave a lasting impression and impact. A thoughtfully chosen name empowers the child with a deeper connection to his value. A name implies value, that the child is valued and that they are important to someone. This elevation of value helps to remove potential

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47. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 101. For example, in the Old testament Abram ("Exalted Father") became Abraham ("Father of a multitude," Gen. 17.5) when God made a covenant with him, Sarai became Sarah ("Princess") to show her importance in the covenant, and Jacob ("May He be at the Heals") became Israel ("One Who Strives with God and Prevails," Gen. 32.28).

maturity-stunting barriers as an identity shaped in value is associated with maturity.<sup>48</sup>

Two of the gospel writers wanted their readers to know that the baby lying in a manger was of great value and would one day save and deliver humanity into a new relationship with God. This baby was ceremonially granted a name and, with that name, an identity.

Matthew records that when Joseph was deciding his options upon learning his wife-to-be was pregnant, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him that this child will be born and “you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”<sup>49</sup> Jesus’ nature, purpose, or identity was determined first, and in keeping with the ancient traditions, his name reflected this identity. “The name ‘Jesus’ signifies two important aspects of our Lord and Savior: first, it means that He is *Yahweh*; second, it means that He is ‘the Savior.’”<sup>50</sup> Since Jesus’ purpose was first determined and his naming followed, it can rightly be said that he is Jesus, which signifies so much more than saying ‘he is called Jesus’ or ‘his name is Jesus.’ Rather, ‘he is Jesus,’ ‘he is *Yahweh*,’ or ‘he is Savior.’ The name ‘Jesus’ was common among the Jews of the era, yet this name did “uniquely express Jesus’ work on earth: to save and to deliver.”<sup>51</sup>

If identity was also conferred with naming, and Jesus’ identity was equated with the salvation of all people, the question that naturally rises is how much of this identity

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48. Erik H. Erikson and Joan M. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: Extended Version with New Chapters on the Ninth Stage of Development* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 73.

49. Matt 1:21.

50. Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), 313.

51. Carpenter and Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words*, 313.

was he aware of? At what life stage did Jesus know he was the Son of God? If it was at birth, then there seems to be little need to become mature, for a godhead would already possess mature characteristics. We hear echoes of this in the third stanza of the popular lullaby "Away in the Manger:"

*The cattle are lowing  
The poor Baby wakes  
But the little Lord Jesus  
No crying He makes.*

However, the divine paradox where Jesus was not only fully God, but also fully human does not negate the possibility of self-discovery. Such a discovery needed to result through various culture-related events, such that one's social status has been changed and marked by a celebration.<sup>52</sup> Three events, in particular, that the Gospel writers included were: Jesus' first temple experience, his baptism, and the subsequent wilderness experience. These three events helped confirm Jesus' identity and purpose for the three years of his public ministry that would end with God's ultimate act of incorporating humanity unto himself. It cannot be said that these events were the only ones that helped Jesus transition into the status of Savior and Lord; however, these are three that the Gospel writers felt were important enough to convey aspects of Jesus' part in God's plan of redemption.

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52. By definition, a rite of passage is a transition from one social status to another, usually marked by a ceremony.

## Jesus as an Adolescent

In the Jewish culture, children hear about their coming-of-age experience as soon as they are born. From their earliest days, their parents consciously and deliberately cast into them a vision for adulthood. They tell their children again and again that a day will come when they will lead in temple worship, share a memorized portion of the Torah, and begin to accept adult responsibilities. In this culture, the bar/bat mitzvah ceremonies serves as acts of incorporation, signaling the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, from immaturity to maturity has occurred (Figure 14). The child is now to be held accountable as an adult.

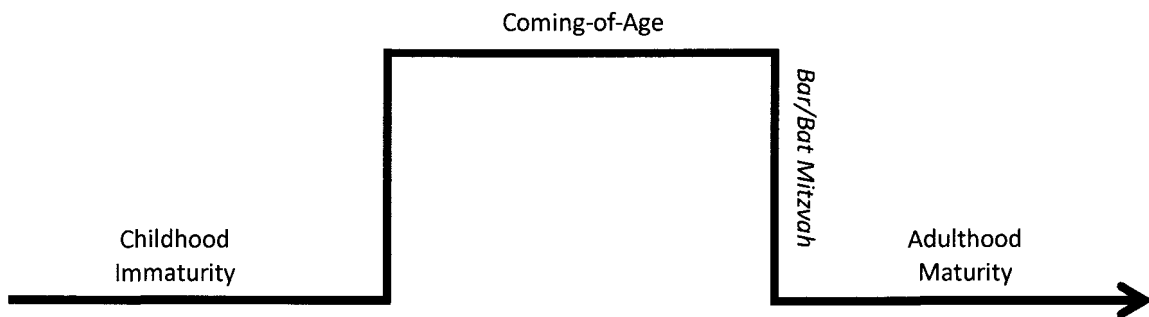


Figure 14. Bar/Bat Mitzvah as a coming-of-age rite of passage.

In Judaism, and particularly Old Testament Judaism, the bar mitzvah signified this age of accountability. *Bar mitzvah* means 'son of commandment' and this would indicate that the child is able, as he was instructed in the law, to have a clear moral sense of what is required by God. He became a son of the commandment, one who was instructed in the law and expected to serve and obey the law.

It is very likely that Jesus experienced such a celebration in his life. Although recorded Scripture does not provide much insight into Jesus' younger years or

preparation, Luke does describe an event, a first event, where we find Jesus taking an active part. Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph had gone up to Jerusalem for the yearly remembrance of the Passover, a festival for those 12 years and older. The journey was an annual custom among religious families. It is quite possible that this particular account describes Jesus' first pilgrimage. Luke tells us that Jesus became separated from his parents, entered into the Temple, and demonstrated learnedness of the Scriptures that amazed even the brightest in the room. Although it cannot be said with any certainty that this was Jesus' bar mitzvah, it is not too far of a reach to believe that Luke was celebrating it as such.

Maybe the best biblical example of maturity is how Luke sums up Jesus' childhood years in which he says "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man."<sup>53</sup> This statement followed what was very likely Jesus' coming-of-age experience and, as a result, he was now no longer considered a child but an adult performing the religious duties expected of an adult.<sup>54</sup> At 12 years of age, Jesus became a man, someone that is religiously and culturally required to go to temple. The gospel writer John reminds his readers that Jesus has accepted this new status of taking responsibility for his spiritual growth. As the primary result of Jesus' particular coming-of-age experience, his allegiance for primary obedience shifted from his earthly father or family to his Heavenly Father (Figure 15).

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53. Luke 2:52.

54. At the age of 12, according to Jewish Custom, a male is able to participate in the Passover celebrations. This was the child's first opportunity to participate with adult status, thus serving as a coming of age event.



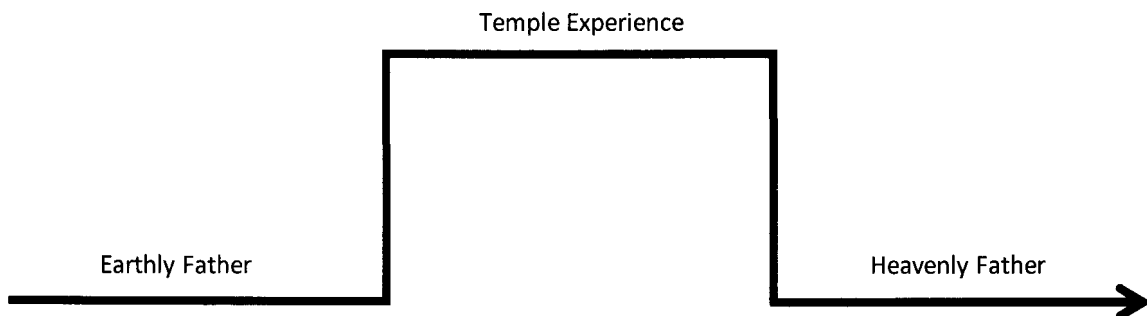


Figure 15. Jesus' temple experience as a rite of passage.

### **Jesus as a Man**

Obedying his Heavenly Father began at that moment in the temple and would be reiterated throughout his public ministry. The gospel writer John acknowledges this when Jesus testifies for the first time that he does exactly what the Father tells him to do.<sup>55</sup> Through this ceremonial coming-of-age rite, Jesus took on a lifestyle pleasing his Father. Had he not stayed behind to speak in the temple, he would have disobeyed his Heavenly Father. He would have remained in a previous social status with primary allegiance to his earthly family. This choice would have been disobedience; a sin that would alter the Son of Man's mission and thus make him ineligible to obtain the destination God set out for humankind's reconciliation through salvation.

### **Jesus' Baptism**

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark provide detailed accounts of Jesus' baptism, while Luke and John mention the event briefly.<sup>56</sup> In all of these accounts, the authors

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55. John 8:29.

56. Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; 3:21-22; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34.

connect John's baptism of Jesus with the anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit and a declaration of Jesus' sonship. It is clear that Jesus is not a teenager during this event. It is also clear that God used Jesus' baptism as a crossroad in his life as his baptism in fact led to a decisive revelation of his future role as a promised deliverer and savior (Figure 16).<sup>57</sup>

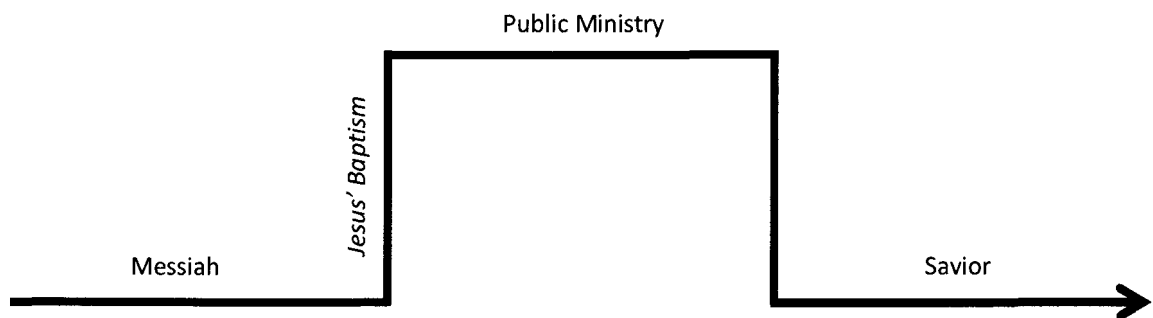


Figure 16. Jesus' public ministry as a rite of passage.

It is worth noting, "Jesus was not being baptized due to any sin, Jesus' baptism represented an act of obedience on his part to God's will as he saw it."<sup>58</sup> The most important aspect of Jesus' baptism was "the heavenly voice which declared pleasure in the beloved Son."<sup>59</sup> Jesus' baptism had a dramatic affect on Jesus' heart as his Heavenly Father was pleased. This announcement by God is the first act that set Jesus apart for his public ministry. His social status was confirmed audibly by God.

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57. D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 566.

58. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1202.

59. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1146.

In many traditions today, churches celebrate the faith marker of baptism. As an act of proclamation, baptism signifies a person's repentance of sin and testimony to his or her union with Christ, especially through identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.<sup>60</sup> The entire baptism rite can be seen as both a symbolized act of separation and an act of incorporation. As the writer of John emphasized, baptism signifies the new birth.<sup>61</sup> This *baptism of suffering* was a total immersion into not just the waters, but into a new relationship with God and church. As illustrated in Figure 17, this rebirth brings about a new relationship with not only God, but also the family of God—the church.<sup>62</sup> It is for this reason that baptism serves as the rite of passage or initiation into the church.<sup>63</sup>

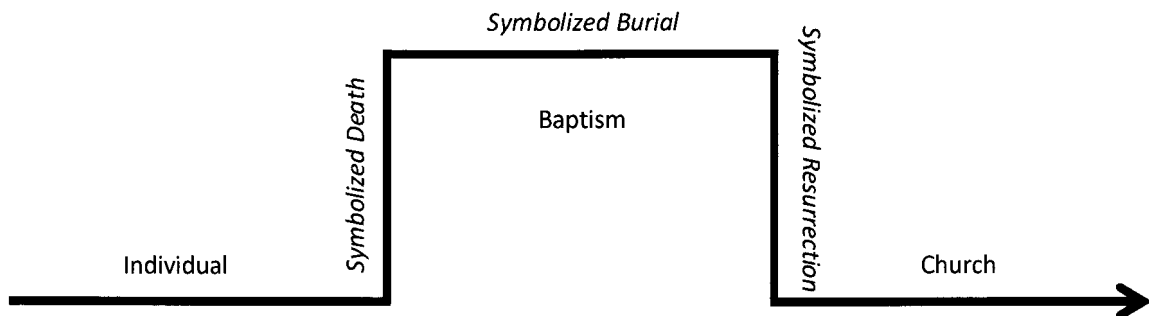


Figure 17. Baptism as an initiation into the church.

60. Rom 6:3–7; Col 2:11–12.

61. John 3:5, 6.

62. Eph 3:15.

63. John D. Barry, Michael R. Grigoni, Michael S. Heiser et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012).

## **Jesus Tempted in the Desert**

In many cultures, incorporation into a new social status is marked by passing a pre-planned or determined test that follows a period of preparation. For example, many consider obtaining a driver's license as a rite of passage, yet the license merely represents incorporation back into society with the new social status of driver. The groundwork for this test may have been laid months prior when the individual first began to prepare for the exam, separating him from others who have yet to take this journey. Many rites of passage events result from the preparation and testing that comes about through a trial. In such cases, these trials prepare the individual for what is to come not only in a social setting, but also in a personal setting.

The expectation of a trial or a test sometimes heightens anxiety. Completion of the trial or test often produces relief that grows into confidence (Figure 18). For example, in the college mathematic courses I teach, I administer two exams each term. It is not unusual to have many students experience nervousness prior to the exam. They are uncertain of what they know, how well they know it, or what may be asked on the exam. However, for those that study and prepare, they usually pass the exam easily. Their success translates into confidence of having understood the material so that they may be ready for the next challenge.

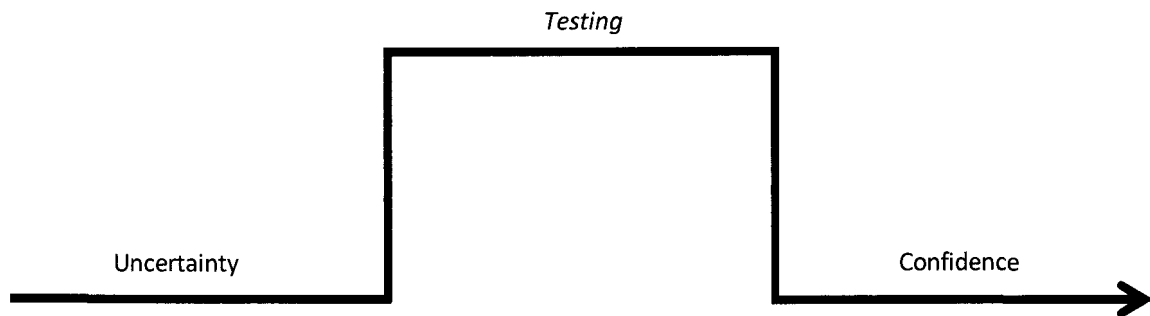


Figure 18. Testing as a rite of passage.

Although no reason is given for why the temptation of Jesus occurred, this event is closely associated with his baptism which can be seen as two successive and complementary acts preparing Jesus for his public ministry. “The references to sonship, ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’ (Mark 1:11; Matt 3:17; Luke 3:22) and ‘If You are the Son of God’ (Matt 4:3, 6; Luke 4:3, 9) ...was a test to determine what kind of Messiah Jesus would be.”<sup>64</sup>

The Hebrew word *nasah* and the Greek word *peirazō* both carry a broad range of meaning that allows them to be translated as either “temptation” or “testing” in the Bible. In the first instance, the word implies enticement to do evil, while, in the second, the connotation is an event or process that proves one’s character or determines the depth or integrity of one’s commitment to God.<sup>65</sup>

It is interesting to note that the devil did not try to reverse the powerful proclamation of the voice from heaven during Jesus’ baptism. Rather the devil argued that since Jesus is what was proclaimed, the Son of God, he should therefore use his powers to yield to temptation and meet his own needs. This was an attack on Jesus’

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64. Bill Cook, “Temptation of Jesus,” In *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1569.

65. James M. Efird and Mark Allan Powell, “Temptation, Testing” In , in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated), ed. Mark Allan Powell, Third Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 1027.

identity, and maybe it can be argued that the significance of a father's word or blessing can entrench within an individual the necessary resolve to tackle future uncertainties.

Matthew sums up the conclusion of this rite of passage reporting, "the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him."<sup>66</sup> Jesus endured and completed this faith marker in his life to become the promised deliverer, mirroring the wanderings of the Israelites and their incorporation into the Promised Land.<sup>67</sup> It is noteworthy that each Gospel placed the temptation prior to Jesus' public ministry, suggesting that the Holy Spirit's role and leadership were necessary for the preparation of what was to come.<sup>68</sup>

### Conclusion

The act of creation inaugurated a period of shalom, best described by God as "good." This created world and the living creatures within it enjoyed boldness and joy in the presence of their Creator. The first sin served as an *act of separation* that marked the end of this bliss, forcing humankind to view their relationship with creator as a fallen being. Adam and Eve lost their moral innocence and favor with God. Their relationship with God is now marred by fear, alienation, separation, and death. "Death does not descend *immediately* upon man after the fall as *final* judgment is indicative of God's

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66. Matt 4:11.

67. Mark McVann, "Rituals of Status Transformation in Luke-Acts: The Case of Jesus the Prophet," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 350.

68. Mark Allan Powell, "Temptation of Jesus," in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated), ed. Mark Allan Powell, Third Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 1027.

saving purpose for man.”<sup>69</sup> There will be opportunity for Adam and his descendents to enter again into a relationship with their Creator, through the work of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was a participant in an array of events that can be modeled within a rite of passage scheme. Jesus’ encounter at the temple, his baptism, and his wilderness experience all served as faith anchors that progressively affirmed his explicit relationship with the Father and explicit purpose for the Father. As the visible image of the invisible God, these events were necessary for Jesus to identify himself with humanity and for the redemption of humanity. The image of God has been restored through Jesus Christ, thus completing a cosmic rite of passage:

Because of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, believers are promised a final transformation into the likeness of Christ at His return. “As we have borne the image of the man made of dust, we will also bear the image of the heavenly man” (1 Cor. 15:49 HCSB; cp. 42, 45–48). While there may be much about the image of God that Christians cannot understand or know in their current state, the revelation of Jesus Christ will change believers for eternity. “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2 HCSB; cp. Phil. 3:21).<sup>70</sup>

The New Testament describes this redemption in terms of a re-creation in the likeness of God. Ephesians 4:25 and Colossians 3:10 speak of putting on a new nature, renewed to become like Him. It is through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that affords humanity the opportunity for the image of God to be restored within ourselves.

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69. Elwell and Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 766.

70. Johnson Jerry A., “Image of God,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 807.

Biblical history has shown characteristics of a rite of passage event woven within the Grand Narrative of Scripture, the salvation history of the Israelites, and the life of Jesus. Such events are important moments that serve as anchors assisting the stabilization of faith through periods of uncertainty. Yet, this leaves one significant question behind, a question that is echoed in the Apostle Paul's admonition to the Corinthian church, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me."<sup>71</sup> What would happen if the 'childish' things were not put away? What would happen if reincorporation did not occur? Would "a profound social meaninglessness [set] in?"<sup>72</sup> Or if identity, purpose, and affirmation are associated with a successful rite of passage, is it possible then that the absence of these will destabilize faith and impede spiritual maturity?

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71. 1 Cor 13:11.

72. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 103-104.



## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

It is often suggested that the lack of clear life-passage rites in American culture has contributed to the loss of community and a growing sense of social alienation.

—Catherine Bell, *Ritual*

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

—Luke 2:52

This morning was not unlike every other morning. My wife and I woke up to the sounds of our kids getting out of bed. As I dragged myself to the bathroom, my wife headed towards the kitchen to ready breakfast. Entering the kitchen, I greeted my children, ate a bowl of Honey Nut Cheerios, and returned to the bathroom. I showered, shaved, and brushed my teeth to prepare my body for the day. After drying off and combing my hair, I went and sat on the side of my bed, opened up my Bible, read a chapter and then prayed. Sometimes my kids, wanting my attention, jump on the bed while “I’m talking to Jesus.” Every one of us has morning rituals that we routinely perform. This repetition offers me a sense of the “unchanging realities in the daily flux

of life.”<sup>1</sup> With the infusion of my daily quiet time in this routine, I am reminded of God’s provision and love for me; I am reminded that my identity is in Christ alone, I am reminded of the Holy Spirit’s presence which helps me find stability in a “world of chaos and change.”<sup>2</sup>

These routinely executed rituals become part of my way of doing life and help me end every day with a period. However, there are less frequent moments, rites of passage if you will, that “mark events with exclamation points, highlighting a moment in personal and social change as worthy of collective attention.”<sup>3</sup> My baptism, my first job, graduation were such events that built on the everyday moments to produce a significant leap forward in helping me understand my developing identity, purpose and place in this world.

We saw in the first two chapters of Genesis two humans that marked their days with activities that helped them cultivate and bring order or routine to the earth. They were created as social beings desiring relationship with each other and spiritual beings desiring relationship with their Heavenly Father. Their days, filled with shalom, also ended with a gentle period. That is, until a question of uncertainty entered into this peaceful existence. “Did God really say...” invoked a first question of identity, destabilizing confidence in their Creator. This unique moment proved to be too much of

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1. Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 295.

2. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 295.

3. Ronald Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Re-inventing Rites of Passages* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 133.

a challenge for their faith and ushered both of them through a personal rite of passage event; which, strained their relationship with God. The banishment from the Garden left a void in their being, which through time, ritualistic acts or procedures attempted to restore their lost identity. This yearning for identity must be filled through the gracious act of God himself and new rituals and rites of passages must be devised to serve as the conduit for identity to be reformed in terms of its "sacred importance."<sup>4</sup>

### **Rites, Rituals, and Rites of Passages of the Theorists**

Almost all human generated activity "has been done ritually or made part of a ritual."<sup>5</sup> Rituals exist within the ordinary such as shaking hands, brushing teeth, studying for an exam, or feeding one's dog every morning before coffee. Rituals also exist in the important or sacred such as bowing for worship, celebrating retirement, toasting at a wedding, or reading the Bible. For most people, the rituals have either a religious or secular tone, but are usually associated with "tradition or a cannon of rites."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most common of all rituals is the experience signaling the end of childhood by a *coming-of-age* experience.

In an attempt to categorize such coming-of-age experiences within a whole host of other ritual experiences, we must note that there is no one-size-fits-all-approach,

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4. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 301.

5. Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: University Press, 1997), 91.

6. C. Bell, *Ritual*, 91.

theories have all developed a typology that best conforms to their theorist's bias.<sup>7</sup> For this thesis-project, Paul Hiebert's framework (Figure 19) will be used to contextualize rituals and their associated ritual experiences.<sup>8</sup> He has simplified rituals into three branches: rites of intensification, rites of crisis, and rites of transformation.<sup>9</sup> *Rites of intensification* help to strengthen existing desired structures in a community, such as weekly Bible study, birthdays, and board meetings. The second branch is a reactionary ritual, a *rite of crisis*, such as a rain dance to end a drought, performing a healing, or conducting a funeral. Finally, *rites of transformation* are observed when a people need to "create a new world order"<sup>10</sup> when the old is no longer working.<sup>11</sup> Hiebert further segments this transformational category to include three types of ritual experiences: rites of passages or "life-cycle" rites, induction rites, and pilgrimages.<sup>12</sup>

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7. See C. Bell, *Ritual*, 93. She remarked that some systems are simple, such as Emile Durkheim's division of ritual into a positive or negative action. Ronald Grimes purposed a system with 16 categories: rites of passages (couvade, birth, baptism, initiation, puberty, circumcision,) marriage rites, funerary rites, festivals, pilgrimage, purification, civil ceremonies, rituals of exchange, sacrifice, worship, magic, healing rites, interaction rites, mediation rites, rites of inversion, and ritual drama. See Ronald L. Grimes, *Research in Ritual Studies* [1982] (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow press, 1985), pp. v-vi, 68-116. Catherine Bell's typology included six categories: rites of passage or "life-cycle" rites, calendrical and commemorative rites; rites of exchange and communion, rites of affliction, rites of feasting, fasting, and festivals, and, finally political rituals. See C. Bell, *Rituals*, 94.

8. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 308-9. Although C. Bell's typology has scholarship and depth, Hiebert's has a higher degree of religiosity woven into his framework. This framework is more useful for setting the stage in this thesis-project.

9. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 302.

10. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 303.

11. This is similar to Jean Piaget's idea of accommodation where transformation into a higher stage of cognitive ability only occurs when a new idea cannot be assimilated into an existing framework.

12. Hiebert, et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 308-9.

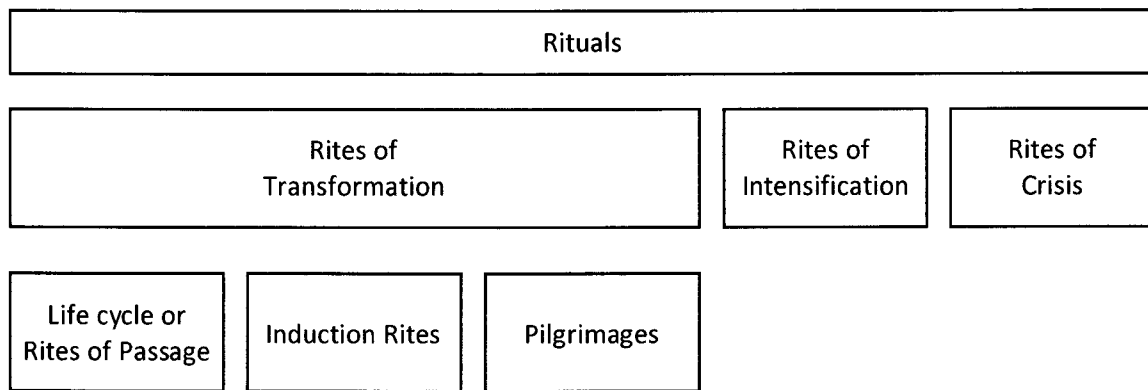


Figure 19. Ritual Classification

Rites of passages are practiced in virtually every society in the world. Some of the most popular and dramatic are the coming-of-age events seen in various tribal communities to demonstrate the end of childhood with an initiation into adulthood.<sup>13</sup> The first such event that left an impression on me was a cinematic Anglo portrayal of the Sun Dance, an initiation experience where the individual is suspended from bone daggers stuck through his pectorals and left to hang over night.<sup>14</sup> It was the universal appearance of such life events that informed the Arnold van Gennep, near the turn of the twentieth century, to first coin the term *rite of passage*.<sup>15</sup> He frames this in the broadest terms:

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13. See Arthur Magida, *Opening the Doors of Wonder: Reflections of Religious Rites of Passages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006) for depictions of various cultural and religious coming of age rites of passages.

14. *A Man Called Horse*, directed by Elliot Silverstein, screenplay by Jack DeWitt, featuring Richard Harris (Cinema Center Films, 1970), DVD (Paramount Home Video, 2003).

15. Arnold VanGennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1960), 10.

For groups as well as for individuals, life itself means to separate and to be united, to change form and condition, to die and be reborn. It is to act and to cease, to wait and rest, and to begin acting again, but in a different way... And there are always new thresholds to cross: the thresholds of summer and winter, of a season or a year, or a month or a night; the thresholds of birth, adolescence, maturity, and old age; the threshold of death and that of the afterlife—for those who believe in it.<sup>16</sup>

He then developed a model to best understand the rituals associated with the crises of life stage transitions, the critical moment when individuals move from one social status to another.<sup>17</sup> Van Gennep defined rites of passage as “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age.”<sup>18</sup> Ritual expert Catherine Bell defines rite of passage as, “ceremonies that accompany and dramatize such major events as birth, coming-of-age initiations for boys and girls, marriage, and death as these culturally mark a person’s transformation from one stage of social life to another.”<sup>19</sup> Van Gennep's discovery of a three-stage social schema has become one of anthropology's best known models for the classification of various social transitions around the world. It is this model that undergirds this thesis-project’s quest to best evaluate faith stability within the adolescent transition from childhood into adulthood.

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16. Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 189-190.

17. A note should be made about the translation of van Gennep’s terminology. In the introduction of the English version, Solon T. Kimball remarked that ‘rites of transition’ more closely approximates the translation of ‘life crises’. Further his pattern of separation, merge, and aggregation are reflected in translation as separation, transition, and incorporation See van Gennep, vii.

18. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1997), 94.

19. C. Bell, *Ritual*, 94.

When one thinks of rites of passage as van Gennep does, a territorial connotation implies physical movement of the initiate. Although there can be emotional and symbolic 'movements,' it is the actual physical separation, a crossing of a threshold into a new space that marked many cultures van Gennep studied. Drawing on the Latin root *limen* for threshold, van Gennep calls his three stages as they relate to the central phase. This *liminal* or on-the-threshold phase follows a *preliminal* or before-the-threshold phase, and precedes a *postliminal* or after-the-threshold phase.

Of significant interest to this study is where the work of transformation occurs through various rituals. Gennep's central stage or transition can last an instant, minutes, days, months, or years depending on the particular practice or social change being monitored. However, this initiation into a new stage of life is independent of initiation into other aspects of life.<sup>20</sup> For example, just because a girl is physically able to bear a child does not socially invoke her immediate status of adulthood or that the Protestant practice of baptism suggest an ability to maintain a checking account.

Adolescents can simultaneously confuse and surprise adults. I have often noticed that within a short period of time an adolescent will respond to a situation as an adult, then without notice or cause, respond as a child to a similar situation. It was Victor Turner, who extended van Gennep's work of the transitional phase to describe this "ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories."<sup>21</sup> Adolescents,

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20. Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 65.

21. Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites De Passage," *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, 4th ed., Edited by. William Lessa and Evon Vogt (New York: Harper Row, 1979), 236.

sometimes children, sometimes adult, but never either are navigating a transitional space between their former role and future status, they are living in the 'betwixt and between.'"<sup>22</sup> This already-not-yet nature of the phase is where there is power to transform and rituals in place to neutralize the danger of uncertainty.<sup>23</sup>

Just as van Gennep understood passage from one state to another can have perceived danger, simply because the initiate is in neither state, anthropologist Mary Douglas added that a pollution of unmitigated uncertainty will permeate the initiate and its cohort.<sup>24</sup> This danger defined by transitional uncertainty can be controlled by rituals that direct the transition from separation to reincorporation. The initiate is in a period of becoming, moving towards a new role yet without having the capacity to articulate the challenges from the perspective of the new status. The stresses and tensions built into this social structure create a "social drama" that envisions less of a static organization, but rather a dynamic process.<sup>25</sup> The transition does not solely aim to restore social equilibrium, but attempts to further refine the marks of community through redefinition and renewal.

*Liminality*, the sum characteristics of this transitional phase is best understood as a period of *anti-structure* and *communitas*, two concepts that Turner added to this

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22. Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between," 234.

23. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, (London: Ark, 1984), 96.

24. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 96.

25. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 33.



anthropological study of ritual. In regards to the social aspect within this anti-structure, Turner extended van Gennep's conception, which may be described as follows:

When people engage in ritual activity, they separate themselves, partially if not totally, from the roles and status they have in the workday world. There is a threshold in time or space or both, and certainly a demarcation of behavior, over which people pass when entering into ritual. The day-to-day world, with its social structure is temporarily suspended.<sup>26</sup>

Victor Turner calls this idea *communitas*, an idea that connotes the "soul or the essence of ritual."<sup>27</sup> For Hiebert—this is where the "the humble and lowly meet the sacred and powerful as equals."<sup>28</sup> For example, *communitas* may be seen in a late-in-the-week youth camp worship service, where all social status of: jock, nerd, wallflower, rich or poor are lost in a sea of emotion, revival, and worship. Turner calls this a *generalized social bond*:

What is interesting about liminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with a "moment in and out of time," and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond...<sup>29</sup>

Theologian Tom Driver reacts with concern that this generalized social bond created within liminality, if distanced from symbolism and is more closely associated to the actual interaction of people, social stratification could pollute the cohort and negate the shared moment. In other words, when everyone is focused on the same thing, they

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26. Tom Driver, *The Magic of Ritual, Our Need for Liberating Rites that Transform Our Lives and Our Communities* (New York: Harpers Collins, 1991), 159.

27. Driver, *The Magic of Ritual*, 160.

28. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 298.

29. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 96.

are not able to focus on each other. Therefore, ritual can act as a temporary relief to balance out the range of social status.<sup>30</sup> Reading more of Turner corroborates this concern:

... a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties. These are the ties organized in terms either of caste, class, or rank hierarchies or of segmentary oppositions in the stateless societies beloved by political anthropologists. It is as though there are here two major "models" for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of "more" or "less". The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to general authority of the ritual elders.<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, there are issues of purity at stake. Utilizing the work of Mary Douglas, Turner asserts that liminality is a phase in which there "is a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction."<sup>32</sup> For example, a student may be convicted of their disobedience, wrongful behavior, or attitudes during a midweek camp worship service. The presence of God amidst worship threatens the pollution within their life-style and the only source of resolution is the removal of the unclean through the grace of God. Turner confirmed Douglas' hypothesis, "[the initiate] nearly always and everywhere are regarded as polluting to those that have never been...inoculated against

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30. Driver, *The Magic of Ritual*, 162.

31. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 96.

32. Turner, "Betwixt and Between," 236.

them, through having been themselves initiated in the same state.”<sup>33</sup> Without the support of the *communitas*, the removal of the pollution, or in the case of the youth camp worship service, sin may be misdiagnosed as emotionalism, as noted by Grimes, “people are peculiarly vulnerable” during a transformational event.<sup>34</sup>

As a whole, these three phases represent a rite of passage or life-cycle. However, these three phases are not always developed with equal importance or elaborated equally.<sup>35</sup> The three-stage schema is illustrated in Figure 20.

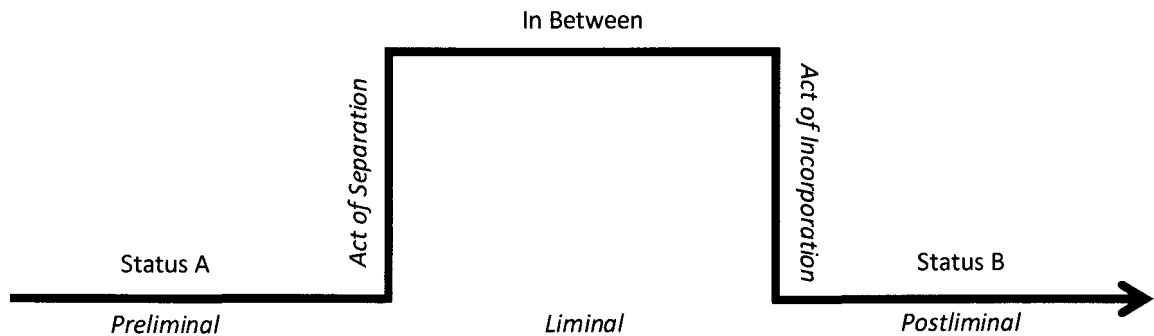


Figure 20. van Gennepe's rite of passage model.

Paul Hiebert's description interprets this process to begin with a separation from *ordinary life*, a setting aside for ritual activity, and then a return to *everyday life* (Figure 21).<sup>36</sup>

33. Tuner, "The Betwixt and Between," 236.

34. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 293.

35. van Gennepe, *Rites of Passage*, 11.

36. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 296.

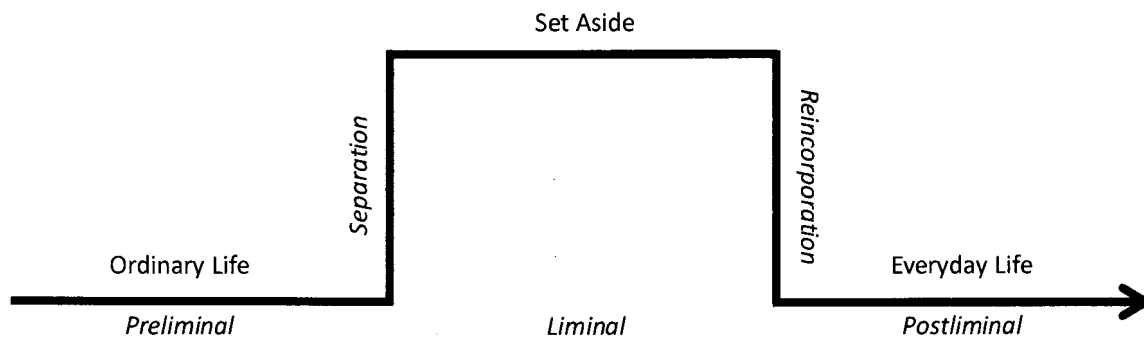


Figure 21. Hiebert's interpretation of the van Gennepp's rite of passage model.

An often disregarded aspect of these van Gennepian models is society's role in reincorporation. It cannot be left up to the initiate to figure out for themselves the social boundaries of their new status in everyday life. This role belongs to the awaiting community. Social reinforcement comes from the various communities in the everyday life such as: the church, parents, the initiate's new ministry group, school, etc. However, reincorporation is not automatic. In studying rite of passage experiences as applied to outdoor programs, Brent Bell discovered three major challenges with Van Gennep's third stage which would make reincorporation unlikely in contemporary contexts.<sup>37</sup>

First, outdoor educators tend to neglect the importance of the community in providing an elaborate incorporation ritual to support initiates after the transitional/liminal phase; [second], the people supporting a role-shift may not believe in a single, instant, powerful experience as the determinant for new responsibilities (for good reasons), but rather see growth as a slow process of accumulations; and [third] democratic post-industrial societies value role pluralism, where freedom from role definition is often valued more than defined role clarity.<sup>38</sup>

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37. Although Brent Bell was concerned with the reincorporation of initiates after an outdoor education event, his analysis is viable within the ministry setting.

38. Brent Bell, "The Rites of Passage and Outdoor Education: Critical Concerns for Effective Programming," *The Journal of Experiential Education* 26, no. 1 (2003): 45.

A research study by Pamela Cushing in 1998 similarly concluded that even though adolescents were undergoing typical adolescent development, significant ritual events failed to be a rite of passage event. When students completed the transition phase, their return to community was welcomed but as the same roles of when they left.<sup>39</sup> The reincorporation into everyday life did not occur. Bell asserts that “having a system of support post-trip may be the essential component to a traditional rite of passage.”<sup>40</sup> This support will need to have the wherewithal to specifically support the returnee’s change of status.<sup>41</sup> Looking within a church community structure, Stephen Venable studied a specific rite of passage for adolescents. He noted specifically the importance of church community in the reintegration of the students after the liminal phase.<sup>42</sup> This corroborates Kenda Dean’s assessment that the home or faith community, where reincorporation will occur, must be ready to “imagine the world in ways that reinforce our decentered perspectives and our newly discovered loves and worldviews [or] the experiences of God...will soon evaporate.”<sup>43</sup> The supporting nature of a smaller

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39. Pamela Cushing, “Completing the cycle of transformation: Lessons from the rites of passage model,” *Pathways: The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education* 9, no 5 (January-February 1998): 10.

40. B. Bell, “The Rites of Passage and Outdoor Education,” 46.

41. Many times students return from a camp experience where a significant life decision was made. However, this experience was not experienced with the community back home, making it difficult for the family or community to accept that a transformation occurred, and therefore is unable to adjust accordingly to maintain a system of support, so that transformation can stick. It is similar to a drug addict returning from the outpatient treatment, only to return to his previous environment of drug culture.

42. Stephen Venable, “Adolescent Rites of Passage: An Experiential Model,” *The Journal of Experiential Education* 20, no 1 (May 1997): 11.

43. Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (Oxford: University Press, 2010), 182.

community or church family will be better positioned to socially reinforce the initiate's transformed identity.

Although change can be viewed as coming from one powerful experience, such as conversion or being saved; it is many times a slow and continual developmental process.<sup>44</sup> Brent Bell concludes his remarks,

the rite of passage in its simple conception is viewed as a dramatic "trading" of roles...and the Rite of passage model mediates the shift. Rarely does a person 'trade places' so dramatically in western contemporary cultures where few common conversion experiences are valued as defining moments of change. Instead contemporary culture views a person as a 'work in progress;' people warm up to a role, steadily accumulating more responsibility and competence as the progress.<sup>45</sup>

Georgetown University professor Arthur Magida cautions that many times these rites of passage experiences fail to provide a dramatic shift in the initiate's transformation,

the key may not be *how* we remember them, maybe not even *if* we remember them. The key—the real key—is that, at some obscure level, these rites have etched a new story for us among the tales that buoy and sustain us. In ways known and unknown, they make a dent on who we are and who we may yet be.<sup>46</sup>

This concern is warranted in that there are many that participate in some fashion of a rite of passage experience, yet see no specific transformation that occurred during the actual event. It is as though some are expecting a magical transformation caused by the

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44. Roger D. Abrahams, "Ordinary and Extraordinary Experiences," In *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 50.

45. B. Bell, "The Rites of Passage and Outdoor Education," 47.

46. Magida, *Opening the Door of Wonder*, 8.

event, rather than see the event as a mechanism to celebrate the already occurring transition.

A rite of passage event has opportunity to transform, but more importantly, they mark a milestone with an anchor and a beacon. Further, this respect will not erase the potential danger associated with crossing this threshold into a new social status. Many of those that minister to the emerging generation lack the experience to moderate a historical rite of passage event that confidently distinguishes a faithful reimagining of the event. Ronald Grimes suggest that this inexperience shouldn't erect a barrier, but rather encourage the freedom to imagine what the experience should be like and invent a contextual approach to enact.<sup>47</sup> In helping the youth leader develop a rite of passage, Kara Powell suggests that "rites of passage and other faith rituals need not be ancient to be effective in transmitting identity and a sense of God's love, though we can leverage wisdom from historic practices."<sup>48</sup>

Transformation is required for a rite of passage to be successful, transformation of the individual and transformation of the communities that design them.<sup>49</sup> There are ways to reinvent such rites of passages so that transformation can be experienced.

However, if we only create rites of passages that mimic the romanticized initiations

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47. See Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 4. Grimes suggest that rites are filled with meaning, but can be misused or abused in practice. Many in ritual tradition suggest that the negative consequences of such rites are due to the enactment of such rites outside of the original population that rites of passages were intended. Grimes suggests that we can borrow, faithfully, rites of passage experiences from other populations, but they would require a faithful imagination to reinvent the rite of passage for a new context.

48. Kara Powell, Brad Griffin, and Cheryl Crawford, *Sticky Faith Youth Worker Edition: Practical Ideas to Nurture Long-term Faith in Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 62.

49. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 6.

found in the jungle tribes of Africa, then we will lose out on the special moments in ordinary life.<sup>50</sup> Rites of passage events are not sacred in of themselves, they do not produce a magic outside of our time and space. Rather, rites of passages are enacted to attend to a special moment in the transitions of our life. For without such events, the life transition can become as Grimes notes, a “spiritual sinkhole,”<sup>51</sup> or as Magida fears, a loss of direction.<sup>52</sup>

### **Religious Rites of Passages**

In most cultures, social life is a series of major and minor ritual events. Secular cultures typically mark birth, marriage, and death as a rite of passage. However, traditional or religious societies “envelop one in a nearly endless sequence of ritual obligation.”<sup>53</sup> Catherine Bell sets this idea within many religious traditions that go on to “orchestrate the whole of human life as a series of ritual passages and obligations.”<sup>54</sup> For a comparative sampling, listed are examples of this structure from an Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic tradition, Judaism, and the Hindu religion.

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50. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 336-7.

51. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 6.

52. Magida, *Opening the Door of Wonder*, 15.

53. C. Bell, *Ritual*, 95.

54. C. Bell, *Ritual*, 98.



The Eastern Orthodox and Roman forms of Catholicism identify seven

'sacraments' that span birth to death:<sup>55</sup>

1. The Rite of Baptism, a few days after birth that removes the stain of sin and allows the child to be part of the 'reborn' community.
2. The Rite of Reconciliation, about seven years of age when a child serves penance and makes restitution for their sin.
3. The Rite of first communion. (The Lord's Supper).
4. The Rite of confirmation takes place around 12-year-olds, signaling a transition to a more adult stage of spiritual depth.
5. Rites of marriage.
6. Rites of holy orders.
7. Anointing of the sick or last rites.

Some of these rites only occur once to mark major transitions in life, a rite of transformation; while others occur regularly throughout one's life, a rite of intensification.

Judaism also lays out a series of ritual passages beginning with the *berit milah* or covenant of circumcision on the eight day after birth. This act brings the child into and under the covenant between God and Abraham. Around the thirteenth year of age, the individual participates in a bar or bat mitzvah. As noted in Chapter Two, this event, meaning son or daughter of the commandment, transitions the child from observer to participant within their religious community. Marriage (engagement, betrothal, and wedlock) also marks a major life passage in Judaism. Finally, ritualized death observations and activities complete the major life transitions within this religious culture.

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55. Catholic Answers to Explain and Defend the Faith, "Sacraments," Catholic Answers, [http://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/sacraments#IV.\\_NUMBER\\_OF\\_THE\\_SACRAMENTS](http://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/sacraments#IV._NUMBER_OF_THE_SACRAMENTS) (accessed February 14, 2015).

Hindu life-passages can number into the forties. These rites known, as *samskaras* for their accent on purifications, are designed to bring the individual through progressive forms of refinement for a full religious identity. Some of these rites include the child's first bites of solid food and first haircut. During adolescence, the *upanayana* may be the most important rite of passage event for a boy, where the child is "reborn" into their caste identity through instruction of the ancient scriptures. Once these *samskaras* are completed during the adolescent years, the boy is now ready for marriage, which is important in its own right as it is the foundation for family and social order.

Protestants have also identified specific life-transitions important for the social progression of identifying with the church body. However, Protestants are leery of rituals with respect to salvation, for the unwanted confusion that the ritual itself was the agent of salvation, not a salvation by faith.<sup>56</sup> The pastoral book, *The Church and the Rites of Passage*, affirmed both the fear of ritualizing life stage events and the importance of identifying such transitions within a context of Christian value.<sup>57</sup> Although not an exhaustive list among Protestant churches, this pastor saw the following life

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56. Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 283.

57. See W. Wayne Price, *The Church and the Rites of Passage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1989). This book was the only pastoral book I could find that would provide a loose historical reference for various rites of passages within my own denomination and life span. This book may be the first to bridge an historical understanding of rites of passages with modern life stages within my denominational context. Throughout his introduction, Price acknowledges the Baptist's concern for ritual abuse, for example conducting funeral for pets and the dedication of skateboards.

stage transitions deserving attention to facilitate growth in faith: birth and baby dedication, baptism, graduation, marriage, retirement, and death.<sup>58</sup>

In most of these cases, the clergy within these varied religious traditions understand the compulsion to affirm various life transitions with a spiritual undergirding. In fact some would go as far to state that these ceremonies are just as important for the observer as the initiate as a means to instruct and remind the participating community of the meaning behind the rite of passage ceremony.<sup>59</sup> For families that are finding themselves farther removed from their roots, the Protestant church has begun to see the potential value in celebrating the transition through various life stages as both a social and religious rite of passage:

We have become a society in geographic transition, taking the moving van to distant places in quest of our fortunes. Many of us have become prosperous but, in the process, we have cut ourselves off from our roots, our support systems. Young couples frequently go through the birth process without a single family member or longtime friend present. Funerals are often conducted with only a handful of mourners. Many marriage ceremonies are performed by clergy who scarcely know the couple, and witnessed by a group with whom the couple has an unfortunately brief history.<sup>60</sup>

The importance of the rite of passage event is that it provides the Protestant church the spiritual resources for “looking back, letting go or taking hold, or moving forward.”<sup>61</sup>

Approaching from a different angle, Timothy Carson, the Senior Minister of Webster Groves Christian Church, sees the religious leader as “strategically positioned”

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58. Price, *Church and the Rites of Passage*, 10.

59. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 321.

60. Price, *Church and the Rites of Passage*, 6.

61. Price, *Church and the Rites of Passage*, 9.

to be a guide for those entering into these transitional experiences.<sup>62</sup> Their first-hand experience as former initiates themselves are best suited to maximize the spiritual application within these life transitions. According to Carson, “assessment, guidance and healing based on such categories as awareness of the holy, providence, faith, grace, repentance, communion, and vocation are especially suited to interpreting transitional phenomena and the intrinsic potentials for transformation they hold.”<sup>63</sup> These events become anchors in the lives of the congregation for spiritual reinforcements amidst the chaotic nature of life-transitions. These are the rules and assumptions that represent both a deep cosmic order underlying people’s lives and a deep personal structure:<sup>64</sup>

Deep [cosmic] structures constitute the core of culture, providing people with their understanding of the ultimate cosmic frame of reality. Humans give expression to their deep beliefs, feelings, and morality in their rituals.

Rituals also give expression to and reinforce the social structures, communicate information about the culture’s cherished beliefs, feelings, and values, and provide a sense of personal and corporate identity to those involved either as participants or as audiences. In so doing, they integrate these into one powerful experience of reality. It is this integration of all dimensions of life in ritual enactments that makes rituals so powerful in both renewing and transforming societies, cultures, and individual persons in short periods of time.<sup>65</sup>

In regards to the personal structure, each individual strives to develop a sense of core identity or purpose. This personal deep structure is an essential part of personality,

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62. Timothy L. Carson, “Liminal Reality and Transformation Power: Pastoral Interpretation and Method,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, no. 7 (Summer 1997): 105.

63. Carson, “Liminal Reality and Transformation Power,” 105.

64. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 287-290.

65. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 290.

and shapes much of who a person is.<sup>66</sup> In terms of "life-cycle" rites, Hiebert augments his thoughts by suggesting a transformed person - one that has achieved a deeper level of core identity - has increased in self-worth.<sup>67</sup> This is something that every emerging adult struggles with as they attempt to escape the drift of adolescence.

To this point, significant literature that has developed our anthropological understanding of a rite of passage has been identified. Arnold van Gennep has provided the general framework as he has identified the various social incorporations individuals undertake by means of a separation, transition, and incorporation within its society. Victor Turner and Mary Douglas extended the analytic framework of van Gennep to identify the liminal characteristics beyond the threshold. This is a world removed from every day notions of time and space, in essence it is an anti-structure where the initiate is caught in the "betwixt and between" of established social norms. Donald Grimes and Arthur Magida cautioned the reader not to just replicate a rite of passage experience, but rather reinvent one full of application and meaning. Catherine Bell and Paul Hiebert directed the discussion into the realm of religion and religions' need for rites of passages, to convey the transformational power of the sacred. I now narrow this conversation to view an adolescent's interaction with a rite of passage event.

To help the reader transition from the general to the specific in terms of life stages, it is appropriate to survey the established literature in regards to adolescent development theory. By definition, rites of passages are transitions that separate a

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66. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 290.

67. Hiebert et al, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 97-98.

social status. Adolescence is a transition between childhood and adulthood, but within adolescent developmental theory there exist identified cognitive, social-emotional, moral, and faith transitions that require scaffolding to hang a rite of passage scheme on. This foundation then lends itself to view the current literature of practitioners that have engaged in systematic efforts to mark life stage milestones with developmentally appropriate rite of passage events for the spiritual benefit of an adolescent.

### **Adolescent Development**

The belief that adolescence follows a progression or pattern of development has long been held true for Western cultures.<sup>68</sup> Society has widely assumed that the individual, in general, progresses through increasingly more complex stages of development over time. Although specific regression may occur from time to time, the overall trend is still one of advancement. Theorists have introduced various characteristics that can be loosely predicted to occur throughout the spans of life in terms of physical, emotional, intellectual, and moral developments. These characteristics help provide an orientation to measure the progression throughout a particular life stage. However, there is no universal agreement on what the specific stages are or the precise time they occur. They can only serve as a guide or a template to characterize the whole of humanity, yet leave allowance for the uniqueness of the individual.

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68. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 287.

The human life span has historically been understood as having two primary stages: childhood and adulthood (Figure 22).<sup>69</sup> The time that separated the two was a transition, not a life span.

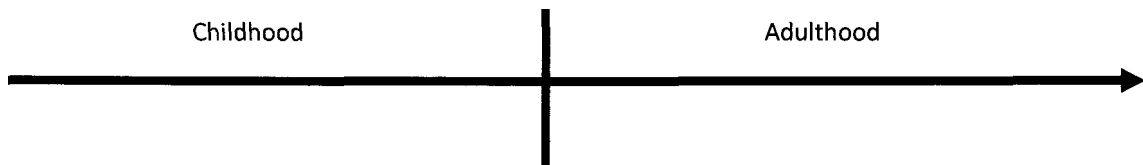


Figure 22. Human Lifespan

The end of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century saw the endorsement of this transitional period as an emerging life span.<sup>70</sup> The adolescent concept as shown in Figure 23, “beginning with puberty and ending with the assuming of full adult responsibilities or even economic independence was approximately three years.”<sup>71</sup> In contemporary American society, a generally accepted range has lengthened this transitional life span four-fold.<sup>72</sup> The expansion of this “in-between” period necessitated the creation of various developmental theories looking at the body, mind and soul in its transition from childhood to adulthood.

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69. Chap Clark, *Hurt 2.0, Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 7.

70. John W. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 13th ed, (New York: McGraw Hills, 2010), 5. G. Stanley Hall's book on adolescences, published in 1904 served as the first significant study on adolescence. Influenced by Charles Darwin, Hall viewed this life stage as a time of storm and stress. According to Santrock, Hall viewed the thoughts, feelings, and actions of adolescents to oscillate between conceit and humility, good intentions and temptation, happiness and sadness.

71. Clark, *Hurt 2.0*, 7.

72. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 17.

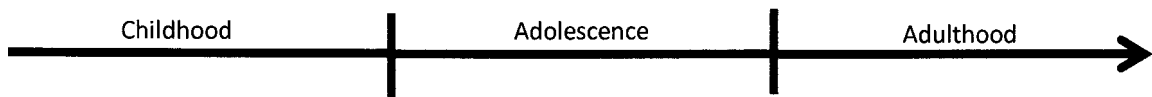


Figure 23. Human Lifespan: Childhood, Adolescence, Adulthood

Adolescent development is an enormous, complex field, and no single, or even several authors, can possibly keep up with all of the rapidly changing content in the many different areas of adolescent development.<sup>73</sup> John Santrock's collegiate textbook *Adolescence* may be one of the best single sources that survey this vast field of adolescent development.<sup>74</sup> It is his work that helped me shape the following discussions that included: Jean Piaget's ideas about adolescent cognition and Lev Vygotsky's social-cultural cognitive development; Erik Erickson's ideas on identity; Lawrence Kohlberg's ideas on moral development, and James Fowler's ideas about faith development (Figure 24).<sup>75</sup>

In order to make sense of the world an individual encounters, Jean Piaget theorized that individuals develop within their mind an ability to organize one's various thoughts, feelings, and experiences into a whole picture. This *schema* thus allows the individual to *assimilate* new information into an existing understanding. Sometimes

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73. A thorough investigation of adolescent development is beyond the scope of this thesis-project. However, a contextualization of this thesis-project lies on a foundation of adolescent development theory.

74. Santrock, *Adolescence*, xxvii.

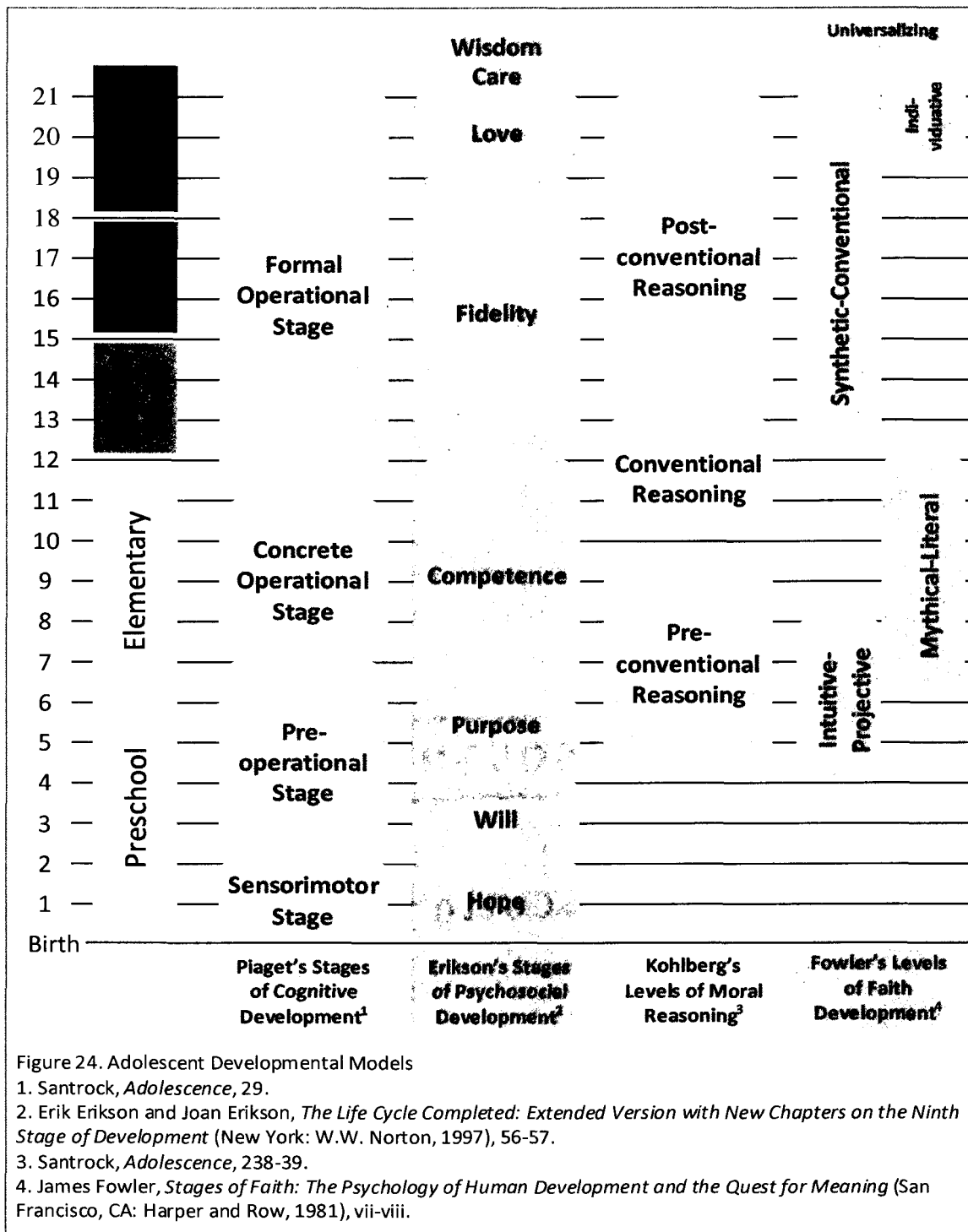
75. This chart illustrates, as a function of age, the theoretical stage of each developmental field. This chart will set a framework to associate the developmental appropriateness for specific rite of passage events. Since individuals progress uniquely through these developmental fields, ascertaining a specific snapshot for a specific person will be unlikely. Understanding the unique developmental characteristics of an individual will better aid the appropriateness and execution of a rite of passage experiences.



individuals must *accommodate* new pieces of information in that they do not fit within their existing framework of understanding. This produces a *cognitive dissonance* leaving the person to feel off balance for a period of time. It is through this process of accommodation that Piaget noted varying levels of cognitive development.<sup>76</sup>

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76. Piaget's understanding is a theory, like most theories there are aspects in conflict. Piaget's theory does not adequately account for the individual differences that characterize the cognitive development of adolescents. Further there is no accounting of how culture influences cognitive development.



Whereas Piaget focused on the individual's attempt for operational thought, Lev Vygotsky focused on collaboration best understood in the context of the particular culture. According to Santrock, Vygotsky understood knowledge to be "distributed

among people and their environments, which include objects, artifacts, tools, books, and the communities in which people live.”<sup>77</sup> One of his most important contributions is the concept of the *zone of proximal development*, which refers to the need for the help of someone more skilled to master a task.<sup>78</sup> Vygotsky understood that transformation occurs in social relation, just as van Gennep understood the social necessity for reincorporation.<sup>79</sup>

Both Piaget and Vygotsky significantly contributed to the idea that there are stages that delineate adolescent cognitive development, clearly characterizing difference in how a child’s brain might work compared to an adult. It is within this ‘in-between’ time of adolescence that the individual is learning to make sense of their developing uncertainties stimulated by an increase of cognitive abilities. Just as the brain is developing, so is the adolescent’s sense of identity.

The foundational questions that formulate a worldview such as: who am I, what is my purpose, what are my beliefs, all begin to surface during adolescence. Erik Erickson has provided the foundation for studying the concept of identity formation.<sup>80</sup> Erickson believed that there were eight stages of human development marked by an impending crisis that must be resolved. Erickson’s fifth development stage, *identity versus identity confusion*, occurs during the adolescent portion of the human life span. It

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77. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 101.

78. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 101.

79. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 101. Schooling, family, peers, the community, and technology shape adolescent thinking.

80. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 143.

is during this stage that adolescents typically try on different personas in an attempt to find out who they are, what drives them, and their purpose in life. They will begin to clarify their political allegiances, interests, cultural identification, religious affiliations, sexual identity, and personality.

An adolescents' sense of right and wrong also becomes challenged during this life stage. Although it was Piaget that developed this idea for the childhood life span, it was Lawrence Kohlberg that developed a theory for the adolescent life span. He proposed that moral development is based primarily on moral reasoning and unfolds in a series of stages. Although not without criticism, especially from Carol Gilligan who suggested there should be a greater distinction between moral thought and moral behavior, Kohlberg's groundwork is still significantly important. In short, Kohlberg's theory tells the developmental story of people trying to understand things like society, rules and roles, and institutions and relationships.

These growing abilities are also establishing themselves as filters to understand issues of faith. Most notably, James Fowler sought to understand the development of faith across the life spans. To Fowler, faith is a "human universal,"<sup>81</sup> a capacity given to each person at birth:

How these capabilities are activated and grow depends to a large extent on how we are welcomed into the world and what kinds of environments we grow in. Faith is interactive and social; it requires community, language, ritual, and nurture. Faith is also shaped by initiatives from beyond us and other people, initiatives of spirit or grace. How these latter initiatives are recognized and

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81. James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1981), xiii.

imaged, or unperceived and ignored, powerfully affects the shape of faith in our lives.<sup>82</sup>

Faith development is not an automatic result of chronology, adolescents are developmentally unable to attain beyond stage three. For Fowler, faith development is beyond the acquisition of a certain set of beliefs or doctrines, but rather the integration of these beliefs into an action that understands meaning of one's life.

As mentioned earlier, adolescent development is a vast field, exploring the multitude of dynamics, it is important to know that there are significant biological, cognitive, socio-emotional, and faith processes that undergird the social understanding of the advancement from childhood to adulthood. To better understand adolescence and potential rite of passage events that can occur during this life span, it is wise to proceed with an integrated understanding of the varying developmental influences within the adolescent life span (Figure 25). These processes are intricately interwoven as humanity is itself an integration of many "ideas, feelings, and values."<sup>83</sup> The popular notion of adolescence being a time of "*storm and stress*" speaks to the uncertainty of how these elements interact when one is tested.<sup>84</sup>

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82. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, xiii.

83. Paul Hiebert, *Anthropologic Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 30.

84. Santrock, *Adolescence*, 5-6.

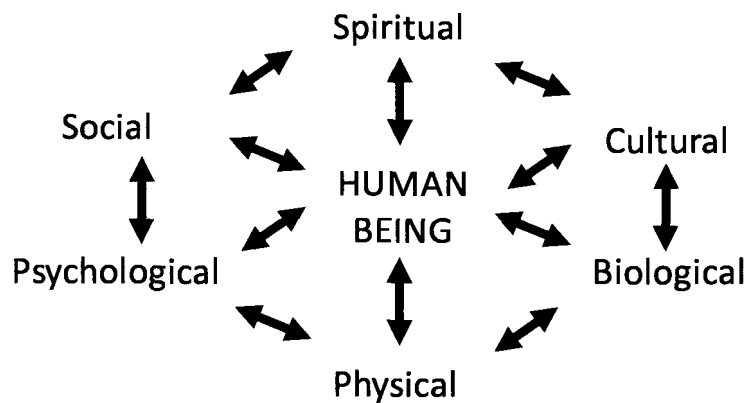


Figure 25. Hiebert's Integrated Approach to Understanding Adolescence

Many of these 'storms' play out in the backdrop during culturally significant milestones. However, as Grimes correctly warns "there is no existing passage system" that suggests an appropriate rite at every defining moment.<sup>85</sup> Although valuable, Grimes cautions that "rites of passages are...imperfect ways of enacting meaning."<sup>86</sup> It is with this warning that our attention can be drawn to the church leaders that have identified various transitions within the adolescent life span and have attempted to coordinate a series of developmentally appropriate and specific rites of passage events as a means to stabilize or develop one's faith. It is through these progressive rites of passage experiences that mark the many milestones, the points in time where faith was vetted in terms of culturally significant moments.

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85. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 289.

86. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, 336.

## The Practitioners

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.<sup>87</sup>

Maturity takes its focus and character from Christ. “When it comes to faith transmission, the first call of the church is surely to its children...”<sup>88</sup> Children are a very real part of the faith community and the church has an obligation to equip the parents and caregivers with a biblical model of discipleship or faith maturation. Brian Haynes, developer of the ‘Legacy Milestones’, exclaims that “rites of passage are one way to move the congregation toward family-equipping ministry.”<sup>89</sup> The preceding passage from Ephesians reminds churches and families to “imagine the end” for the faith development of the young.<sup>90</sup> When the church and family fail, a moralistic and

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87. Eph 4:11–16.

88. Gordon T. Smith, *Transforming Conversion: Rethinking the Language and Contours of Christian Initiation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 180.

89. Brian Haynes, “Building a Milestone Ministry in Your Church,” In *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2011), 193.

90. “Imagine the end” reflects the second of five essentials within the Orange Strategy, where the challenge is to “focus your energy and effort on the issues that will make a lasting impact.” See Reggie Joiner and Carey Nieuwhof, *Parenting Beyond your Capacity: Connect your Family to a Wider Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010).

therapeutic faith will weakly interpret relationship with God. As a corrective, Focus on the Family's Executive Director of Family Ministries, Jim Weidmann believes that "[a] key to solving our 'heritage drifting' problem is to firmly establish spiritual milestones in our families."<sup>91</sup> Celebrated milestones produce the following benefits:<sup>92</sup>

1. Milestones events create a catalyst for deepening the parent/child relationship during those times when your child is most receptive to your values and beliefs;
2. Milestones enhance communication and help establish a pattern for how the parents will relate to their children throughout the growth years;
3. Milestones help establish the parents as the spiritual leaders and spiritual heart of the home;
4. Milestones create a strategic plan for moving your child towards spiritual maturity while also creating and modeling a spiritual heritage for children and grandchildren;
5. Milestones make a powerful impression upon your child's mind and heart, including a ceremony that continues to inspire the child's spiritual hunger;
6. Milestones give parents an effective way to address critical spiritual and developmental issues, often before they become problematic;
7. Milestones provide a process to keep the parents engaged in the relationship during the critical preteen and teen years;
8. Milestones present your child with the most important thing in life—a solid identity in Jesus Christ.

A comparison of Jeremy Lee's ParentMinistry's Rites of Passage Experiences (ROPE), Brian Haynes' *Legacy Milestones*, LakePointe Church's Faith Plan, and Orange's 'It's just a phase' will serve as a practical representation of contemporary ministerial practices expressing the inclusion of such experience within the educational structure or ministry to the emerging generations and their families (Figure 26). The desire to equip

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91. Jim Weidmann, et al., *Spiritual Milestones: A Guide to Celebrating Your Children's Spiritual Passages* (Clovis, CA: Heritage Builders, 2001), 10-11.

92. Weidmann et al, *Spiritual Milestones*, 10.



churches and families with such pivot points is echoed by van Gennep, as he describes the potential transition through a passage, as “[seeing] the sacred where before he has seen the profane.”<sup>93</sup>

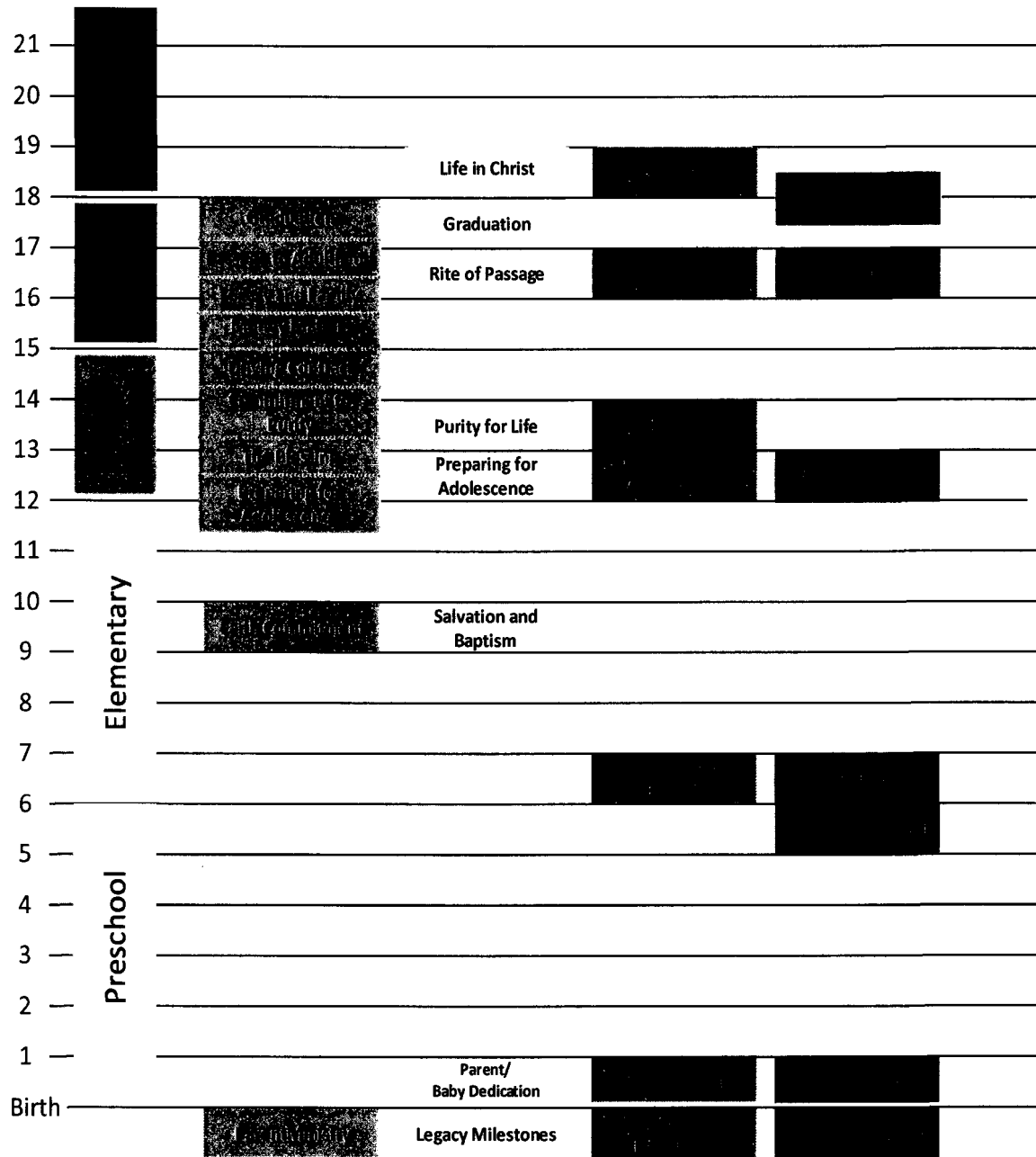


Figure 26. Rites of Passage Models

93. Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 13.

There is both similarity and difference in comparing the four models. Whereas all four include transitional milestones based on a spiritual notion or ministry tradition, such as a faith commitment, purity pledge or graduation, ParentMinistry and Orange extended its markers to include secular and cultural transitions, such as obtaining a driver's license.<sup>94</sup> It is with these two models that one notices Price's yearning for the church to be "ever the primary guardian of both the ceremony and the content of major transitions in our lives."<sup>95</sup> Transitional elements need not originate in the spiritual sphere, but must be understood in the spiritual sphere. In so doing, faith is not compartmentalized among the chaos of the secular, "God calls us to cleanse and reform all the sectors of our lives."<sup>96</sup>

The one issue that is given special attention in each of the models is in regards to conversion. As Fowler noted, there are stages of faith; yet its lynchpin, conversion, is not anchored in age. A faith-based conversion usually coincides with pre-adolescence or adolescence and seldom after adolescence.<sup>97</sup> Whenever it does occur, this transition needs to be clear for the Christian community:

First, it means that young people find their primary identity in Christ, as members of the faith community. The church now becomes their primary "family" identity, and their identity is that of a child of God. Second, it means

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94. Even though each model included High School graduation, a secular event, the cultural history of youth ministry has for years included the celebration of graduates within their ministry cycle.

95. Price, *Church and the Rites of Passage*, 7.

96. Albert Wolters, *Creating Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 2005), 95.

97. "Conversion and Witnessing among Southern Baptist," North American Mission Board, <http://www.namb.net/namb1cb1col.aspx?id=8590001100> (accessed February 25, 2015). Conversion is less likely after 12 years of age.

that their primary confidence or trust is in God as their provider. They move from dependency on parents as their surrogate “god” to a dependency on God and responsibility before God for their own lives. Third and perhaps most of this is represented by baptism...in a late adolescent rite of passage.<sup>98</sup>

Baptism is the symbolic and public act of transformation from a community lost in sin to the incorporation into a community of the redeemed. Symbolic, in that baptism represents the conversion of a sinner into a saint by the grace of God. Public, in that, Christianity cannot be privatized.<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately, many congregations treat baptism as the culmination of our evangelistic efforts and discipleship occurs by happenstance. However, there is no such divide between evangelism and discipleship, and the rite of baptism “must not be treated as a culmination.”<sup>100</sup> Rather it is the representation of the primary faith marker, a ‘baptismal spirituality,’ in that baptism will be the central faith marker of our lives because it “constantly calls us back to our identity as a forgiven people.”<sup>101</sup>

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98. Smith, *Transforming Conversion*, 181.

99. Chuck Colson, “Redefining the First Freedom: More than Worship.” Breakpoint, July 31, 2015, <http://www.breakpoint.org/bpcommentaries/entry/13/27903> (accessed August 3, 2015).

100. Gary A. Parrett and S. Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 51.

101. Smith, *Transforming Conversion*, 153.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

Rites of Passages are like remodeling one's home. To do so one must first tear down the old and go through a period of chaos before the new is completed.  
—Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldview*

An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.  
—Proverbs 24:26

#### **Expanded Purpose Statement**

One of my greatest laments looking back over the last 25 years of ministry is watching some of my adolescent students drift away from their faith as they drift along in life. It is possible the faith of these students was not adequately challenged and, therefore, not strengthened during key milestones of adolescence, which possibly, stymied their understanding of a Christ-Centered identity or purpose. One's identity and purpose are best understood within a biblical framework. As this framework becomes increasingly vulnerable to cultural tides, identity and purpose can further deviate from God's intent. The more entrenched uncertainty becomes within adolescence, the harder it becomes to later see oneself as an adult. It is with this lament, that my heart yearns

for the next generation of believers, while trudging through their adolescent years, that I impress on a student the importance of identifying, evaluating, and incorporating potential faith-stabilizing markers, or rites of passages, in this pathway toward adulthood.

Childhood merges into adolescence, and adolescence drifts into adulthood. Adolescence is a life stage of transition. In his studies, Arnold van Gennep, formulated this transitional concept in terms of *rites of passage*. This is an event where an individual is removed from one social status and is transitioned into a new social status. But because of the complexities of humanity, many transitions are blurred. The beginnings and endings of which are difficult to determine and perhaps even more difficult to describe are the in-betweens.

Further complicating these matters are the biological, cultural, economic, and religious factors that are constantly evolving, asking a vulnerable population to comprehend concepts beyond their developmental capacity. That is why it is critical for the local church to acknowledge this rapidly changing environment and more aggressively and intentionally work along with the family in the partnership of discipleship, taking into account not just the spiritual, but the whole of the person. This “partnering with the home” is a fundamental revival within the contemporary church, something that our Old Testament ancestors saw as normative.<sup>1</sup>

As family ministry is a partnership with the home and the church, a rites of passage model is a partner with the church’s ongoing discipleship strategy. This

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1. Deut 6.

application of a rites of passage structure cannot exist isolated from a church's discipleship strategy. Such a comprehensive approach can provide a potential spiritual benefit to the initiates, or those who are undergoing transition, but also to those observing, as they have an active part in fully accepting the individual into their community.

My hope is that the emerging generation will grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.<sup>2</sup> Biblical adulthood is not automatic and in many ways can get delayed or derailed by societal influences. I have discovered through a study of Scripture and through a literature review that a preventative measure is when the home and the church can leverage significant milestones, coordinate them with a spiritual truth so that a faith marker is created and celebrated by the community of those that have already acquired said faith marker. In coordination with an ongoing discipleship strategy, the accumulation of such markers serves as a passage into a stabilized and growing faith in adulthood. These ideas are further examined through a study of five exemplar churches that have incorporated a rites of passage structure within their ministry.

Ministry is relational and perhaps another way to express this notion is to use the same language I used in my initial connection with the five exemplar churches, all of which are putting their best efforts forward in ministering to the families of their churches using rites of passages:

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2. Luke 2:52.

My Name is Willy Hughes. I have been a pastor in the Northwest for over twenty years. My calling into ministry stemmed from a desire to help children and youth become spiritually and emotionally mature adults.

As a part of my personal growth, I joined a DMIN cohort at Gordon Conwell Seminary in Boston Mass, led by Adonis Vidu, Walt Mueller, and Duffy Robbins. It has been a great three years of camaraderie and personal and intellectual growth. This venture has allowed me to dig a little deeper into the crossfire of discipleship, culture, and theology for the emerging generation. My project that will culminate this experience derives from a ministry aspect that I have been dabbling in much of my pastoral career; yet, ministry demands have not allowed me to formalize or strengthen its integration into our church's discipleship strategy. This idea revolves around the enactment and celebration of a Rites of Passage structure within a church discipleship strategy. (For the purpose of this survey, I will be using the term "Rite(s) of Passage" to describe the intentional celebration or event marking a transition in an individual's life. Similar terms or phrases others have used: Markers, Transitional Markers, Spiritual Markers, Milestones, Mileposts, Faith Paths, Phases, Ministry Maps, etc.)

I have a six-year old and a three-year old. My twenty-plus years in ministry has both prepared me and scared me for what may lie ahead for my kids and their friends. Adolescence is getting murkier and the need for guides and markers to help kids map out a path from childhood toward adulthood is increasingly critical. I am grateful for the renewed interest in these types of markers or Rite(s) of Passage ideas reclaiming a presence within the children/youth ministry culture. I am grateful for churches like yours that have already begun to wrestle with this aspect of a discipleship strategy. With your help I hope to synthesize your experiences into a resource that will help our churches better integrate such ideas into the discipleship of the next generation of believers and give us a clearer picture of how the church and home can use special moments in the life of an adolescent as an opportunity to solidify faith in their transition from childhood to adulthood.

This survey will be confidential and should take no more than 45 minutes to complete. For many, this is asking a lot for an already full schedule. I know that, respect that and will honor that by doing my best with this project. I am also asking you, because I want YOUR thoughts. My goal has been to find a sample of churches that are already walking down this path or are known to be out in front of this discussion. Your name came recommended through exhaustive communications with various church leaders, curriculum writers, ministry experts, authors, church consultants, and barber shop owners. You will be credited and I would love to share my thoughts and results with you, should you desire.

The goal of this survey is to find out a bit about YOU, YOUR ministry setting, and YOUR THOUGHTS about Rite(s) of Passages. Please answer these

questions descriptively, not prescriptively. Meaning, answer these questions based on your observations, NOT based on your desire of what should be.

As I am not getting paid, nor writing a book, nor am I being allocated additional time away from my current responsibilities, this project is simply an extracurricular response to my calling. I genuinely pray that this work honors God and brings glory to his kingdom.

Thank you in advance for your valuable time. I pray that it is rewarded beyond my gratitude.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The rites of passage concept within a ministry context is not entirely novel. It is, however, making resurgence within the Protestant church. I believe this is partially due to a renewed emphasis on Family Ministry or as some call, Next Generation Ministry. This new perspective has begun to motivate many churches to think about ministry in terms of child development from birth through graduation, rather than as three isolated segments: preschool, children, and youth. This resurgence for rites of passages can be seen through various ministry related venues, such as:

- The theme for the 2015 Orange Conference “It’s Just a Phase...So Don’t Miss It,” where keynote speaker Reggie Joiner reminded the audience that “Every phase builds on yesterday’s foundation to maximize the opportunities today so we will have a better story tomorrow.”<sup>3</sup>

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3. Reggie Joiner and Kristen Ivy, *It’s Just a Phase, So Don’t Miss It: Why Every Life Stage of a Kid Matters and at Least 13 Things your Church should do about it*. (Cumming, GA: Orange, 2015), 209.



- The feature story for the April 2015 online version of *YouthWorker Journal: This Week* was titled “Maxing the Memories: Solid Ideas for Creating Rites of Passages for Students.”<sup>4</sup>
- Brian Haynes, the author of *Legacy Milestones*, was invited as a keynote speaker for the 2015 Northwest Ministry Conference in Seattle.

Although these are evidences for a growing awareness of rites of passage within the ministry setting, for the purposes of this study I sought out five ministers in exemplar churches known for having integrated such a system within their discipleship strategy. This study will lead to the development of a comprehensive and strategic family ministry plan that utilizes various life stage milestones as catalysts for the creation of faith markers placed within the lifespan of an emerging adult. The progression from one faith marker to the next will provide the backbone of a discipleship pathway for children and youth.

### Research Question

For this project design to find value in the local church, the analysis must provide an engagement of rites of passage with the struggle of the development of faith and its preservation through adolescence into adulthood. As discussed in Chapter Three, there is a vast amount of literature addressing the many uncertainties associated with the

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4. Stephanie Caro, “Maxing the Memories: Solid Ideas for Creating Rites of Passages for Students,” *YouthWorker Journal: This Week* (April 2015), accessed June 29, 2015, <http://www.youthworkerjournal-info.com/ViewMessage.do?m=zbrmdzwsr&r=fysnndnqdgghn&s=qnvdfjjgcvcrrjvbmhcygpfyycwfbrywv&q=0&a=view>.

adolescent life span. Complicating the biological struggles associated with the onset of puberty are external struggles in which economic and cultural forces are sending out confusing messages. As a result, having the ability to sort out what it means to live in an informational and postmodern world is a huge challenge. According to David Elkind, many traditional markers that once distinguished an adolescent from an adult: “clothing, activities, innocence, media image and adult authority, have all but disappeared as providers of information heralding teenagers’ special place within society.”<sup>5</sup> These uncertainties coupled with the church’s struggle to contextualize its message to a post-Christian environment further hinders an adolescent’s recognition that they are created in the image of God, which we have discovered in Chapter Two, is the fundamental starting point in developing healthy identity.

This recent shift toward a family-based ministry model, a non-segregated approach of ministry with adolescents, is opening up more avenues for additional adult interactions and influences. The formal and informal modeling that occurs during these interactions provides stronger images of what it looks like to be and act as an adult. However, we must be careful to also equip these adults with the tools to intentionally help the child develop faith. Many moms and dads in our local ministry are willing to help their child with their math homework or extra batting practice, even though they may not see themselves as fully capable. However, when it comes to helping their child with elements of faith development, many parents, in my experience, fail to engage at all.

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5. David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capp Press, 1998), 134.

The results of this research will provide an invaluable tool to be used by the family and the church as a means to help moderate a rebalancing of spiritual guidance. The primary method to help parents reengage will be through the identification and celebration of special life stage milestones, where the church can specifically equip the parent to apply a spiritual truth so that a faith marker is formed. The accumulation of faith markers can help to establish a stronger basis for identity formation so that biblical adulthood is reached.

As addressed in Chapter Three, the adolescent has to constantly evaluate his identity in terms of biological, economic, cultural, and religious factors. These factors are integrated and cannot be developed independent of one another. This is modeled in Luke 2:52, “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men,” which underpins Genesis 1:27, that we are made in the “image of God.” Since we are then people that not only relate to God but to each other, we must not underestimate how biology or society challenges and shapes our faith. Taking significant action at key developmental and memorable biological and cultural milestones can help preserve and stabilize faith amidst the challenge of transition from one developmental stage to another.

### **Research Population and Sampling Measures**

The process to find satisfactory exemplar churches began with identifying and networking with various experts within the fields of youth or family ministry. This included seminary professors, curriculum specialists, veteran youth and family

ministers, and ministries that are currently developing rites of passages material for church use. This network of experts provided several church recommendations. The following five exemplar churches and their referrals for selection are listed following:

- Parker Hill Community Church in Northeastern, Pennsylvania recommended by Jeremy Zach, the Youth Ministry Specialist with Orange.<sup>6</sup>
- Eastern Hills Wesleyan Church in Williamsville, New York was also recommended by Jeremy Zach.<sup>7</sup>
- Grace Community Church in Clarksville, Tennessee was discovered through a request submitted to ParentMinistry.net, a curriculum provider known for their comprehensive Rites of Passage Experience (ROPE).<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Grace Community was suggested as an option by Kenny Conley, Orange Conference's Next Generation moderator.
- The Community at Lakeridge in Arlington, Texas was referred through HomePointe, a ministry of LakePointe Church in Rockwall, Texas.<sup>9</sup> In 2012, the Northwest Baptist Convention began a partnership with LakePointe Church in Rockwall, Texas. In the fall of 2013, I joined a group of Northwest pastors for a two-day site visit. It was on this site visit that I

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6. Parker Hill Community Church, <http://parkerhill.org/> (accessed June 29, 2015).

7. Eastern Hills Wesleyan Church, <http://www.easternhillschurch.org/> (accessed June 29, 2015).

8. Grace Community Church, <http://www.gcomchurch.com/> (accessed June 29, 2015).

9. The Community at Lakeridge, <https://mytcal.com/> (accessed June 29, 2015).

was introduced to their church's 'Faith Path' initiative. This initiative, partially developed by Kurt Brunner, is widely available for churches to utilize in their discipleship strategy.<sup>10</sup>

- Preston Trail Community Church in the North Dallas area was discovered as a result of attending the National Orange Conference in Atlanta, Georgia in April 2015.<sup>11</sup> Preston Trail was used by Orange as the primary illustration of how a church can incorporate a rites of passage structure with its discipleship strategy.

The discovery phase also contributed the following churches as additional potential candidates:

- National Community Church in Washington, D.C..<sup>12</sup>
- New Vision Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.<sup>13</sup>

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10." [Kurt] serves as Pastor of Spiritual Formation at Lake Pointe Church and on adjunct faculty with Dallas Theological Seminary. A graduate of Talbot Seminary and former Vice President with Focus on the Family, Kurt led the teams creating films, magazines, books and the popular Adventures in Odyssey program. As President of HomePointe Inc. Kurt also helps local church leaders create a culture of intentional families. He has written more than a dozen books including *It Starts At Home*, *The Purpose of Passion*, *Finding God in the Lord of the Rings* and *Fatherless*, a novel co-authored with Dr. James Dobson." Kurt Bruner, <http://www.kurtbruner.net/> (accessed June, 4, 2015).

11.Preston Trail Community Church, <http://www.prestontrail.org/> (accessed June 29, 2015).

12. Senior Pastor Mark Batterson and Family Ministry Coordinator Nina Schmidgall were speakers at the 2014 Orange Conference. Nina Schmidgall delivered a presentation on their church's family ministry discipleship path.

13. While attending the 2015 Groups200 conference in Nashville, Tennessee in May 2015, I was a tablemates with Kevin Carter, who serves on staff at New Vision Baptist Church as their Adult Groups Pastor. New Vision is the home church where Jeremy Lee developed his Rite(s) of Passage Experience program, which later served as the core of his parentministry.net curriculum and material. Incidentally, Jeremy Lee's initial material that was developed for his home church included content developed by Richard Ross, who since 2000 serves as professor of youth ministry in the Jack D. Terry School of Church

- Rock Bridge Community Church in Northwest Georgia.<sup>14</sup>
- First Baptist Church of Hendersonville, Tennessee.<sup>15</sup>
- First Baptist Church of Houston, Texas.<sup>16</sup>
- First Baptist Church of Fairhope, Alabama.<sup>17</sup>
- Community Church, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.<sup>18</sup>

### **Ethical Guidelines**

The contact person at each exemplar church currently held the primary staff position whose responsibilities included management or development of their rites of passage integration or strategy. Prior to the discussion of any data, each respondent provided oral consent to participate in this study which included the use of any information they provide to be compiled in the results of this study. Additionally, each respondent was informed that neither I nor the participants were eligible for any

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and Family Ministry at my Alma Mater Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Prior to his work at the seminary, Richard Ross served as the youth ministry consultant with LifeWay Christian Resources.

14. Referred by Marianne Howard, communications coordinator for Parentministry.net.

15. Referred by Marianne Howard, communications coordinator for Parentministry.net.

16. Referred by Katy Buckaloo, assistant to lead Pastor Brian Haynes. This and the subsequent requests for referral from Houston's Bay Area Baptist Senior Pastor Brian Haynes were significantly delayed due to a record rainfall and subsequent flood in their ministry area. See Matthew Tresaugue, "Heavy rain creates a new problem for farmers," Houston Chronicle, June 2, 2015, <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Heavy-rain-creates-a-new-problem-for-farmers-6302858.php> (accessed June 4, 2015). Shortly after an initial contact was made with Bay Area First Baptist Church, the Houston area was hit with what the Houston Chronicle called the "wettest rain month on record."

17. Referred by Katy Buckaloo, assistant to lead Pastor Brian Haynes.

18. Referred by Katy Buckaloo, assistant to lead Pastor Brian Haynes.

compensation. It was stated that their contribution would be for research and this study would eventually be used to benefit the local church and the kingdom of God at large.

### **Deliverable**

A primary deliverable of this study is the creation of a graphic showing the interrelationships and sequences of a rites of passage structure within a church's discipleship process. For many churches, this is called a family ministry map. A family ministry map is a visual representation of a child's progression from birth through graduation intersecting various age-graded ministries and life stage milestones. In essence, it is an illustration of discipleship, a model that helps to communicate to the individual, the family, and the church community of the potential ways that a coordinated rites of passage structure will help support faith development.

The results of the study will help the church understand the placement and frequency of the various rites of passage within an adolescent discipleship process. Observations will include how exemplar churches best coordinate biological, cultural, or economic milestones with spiritual truth. Additionally, the results of this study will provide insight into the frequency of performing various rites of passages. Every potential life stage milestone may not need to be promoted or repurposed all in one ministry year. As with any new ministry model or adaptation, there is the danger of implementing too many changes too quickly. Rather, "[t]he most effective way to

change culture is to alter 'coming of age' processes on a cohort basis."<sup>19</sup> I will proceed with two thoughts in mind: (1) I want this process to challenge our people. But (2) I also want the incorporation of this mindset to be successful. The combination of these two ideas will help to evaluate both momentum and timeline.

### **Instrumentation**

I have been asking a question throughout this thesis-project, wondering if the incorporation of a rites of passage structure within the discipleship strategy of a local church's K-12 populations remedies the drift of adolescence. Although the available literature seems to suggest that it does, the data generated by the study is not designed to provide a longitudinal analysis, rather the analysis will capture a qualitative snapshot of some best practices. Given that the parameters of this research is then limited to a conversation of best practices among peers, the primary data collection instrument was designed in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix A).

Good results are a derivative of properly designed questions. Some questions are designed to find out the 'whats' or 'how manys,' while others are designed to find out the 'whys.' The understanding that is being sought through this study is seeking both and as the answers to these questions are analyzed, their results will provide a

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19. James Cote, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York: University Press, 2000), 163.



qualitative and quantitative picture.<sup>20</sup> Although this approach at times feels informal, this does not negate the importance to design the instrument with care and thought.<sup>21</sup>

### **Data Collection**

Collecting data for this thesis-project may have been the most critical for the overall argument presented and it was the portion I was most anticipating. Engaging in the use of a thoughtfully constructed questionnaire with experienced practitioners has the potential for significant networking and learning. It is with this sense of respect that great care was taken into how to best collect data. The data collection process was divided into four segments:

- A brief introduction through email or voicemail.
- A live conversation.
- Collection of the data.
- A follow-up to express appreciation.

After the discovery of the potential five exemplar churches, I constructed both a written and verbal introduction that briefly included my name, my role in the local church, and my desire to learn more about rites of passages in the local ministry context

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20. Wilhelmina C. Savenye and Rhonda S. Robinson, "Qualitative Research Issues and Methods: An Introduction for Educational Technologists," In *Handbook of Research for Educational Communications and Technology: A Project of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology*, ed. David H. Jonassen (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillian, 1996), 1173.

21. Sharon Shrock and William Coscarelli, *Criterion-Referenced Test Development: Technological and Legal Guidelines for Corporate Training and Certification*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: International Society of Performance Improvement, 2000), 108-111.

(Appendix B). It was felt that there would be a greater chance of success if the first contact was a very brief email or voicemail introduction. I wanted the respondent to already have a level of buy-in before our first direct exchange. Additionally, this allowed the first conversation to be scheduled and expected, rather than intrusive. This gave the respondent the opportunity to choose their mechanism for response: reply to the email, return the phone call, or nothing at all. Their choice of how to enter into the engagement afforded me information on how much to press for a first direct exchange.

The second part of this process was the direct exchange or live introduction. Due to the fact that many of these churches were located beyond my local geographic region, this was conducted by phone. Since the live introduction was the second point of contact, I was able to offer my personal greetings and credentials a second time, hoping to gain a genuine level of trust and camaraderie before I asked for consent into the gathering of data. My extensive experience in ministry suggests that fellow practitioners love sharing about their ministry experiences, both what is working and what is not. Despite this being the norm, I did not approach the potential respondents with this assumption and rather gave them opportunities to not participate. Fortunately, all five respondents were eager to offer their oral consent and share their knowledge for the purposes of this research.

Initially, the questions I wanted to address were developed with the intent for the respondent to complete via an online form or exchange. The questionnaire was created in both Google Forms and Survey Monkey, each having differing advantages and

limitations.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, the costs savings and ease of use of the Google platform was chosen. The questionnaire was also crafted in a Microsoft® Word document.

I learned, in my first interaction with a respondent, that the strategy of asking the respondent to subsequently fill out an online questionnaire could be problematic. Many of the respondents maintain a very busy schedule and asking them to fill out a questionnaire at a later time may miss the window of productivity and would require a follow-up strategy that could become dangerously close to nagging, leading to a loss of interest and potential long-term colleague.

The collection of data for four of the five respondents was delivered during the initial live introduction.<sup>23</sup> To maintain consistency, yet freedom, for the respondents to interact, I followed the same introductory script that I presented at the beginning of this chapter. At the end of the script, I formally asked for consent, reminded them that the results of the questionnaire will be used as part of this dissertation and its research.

After consent was granted, I endeavored to follow the questionnaire as it was designed. I placed the recipient on speaker, asked a question then typed into a Word® document their response. I asked for clarification only if there was a word or phrase I did not understand correctly. This occurred a few times due to either a poor signal in the phone line or the respondent's accent being unusual to my normal communication. Because of the nature of having a questionnaire delivered as a live interview, there was

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22. The primary disadvantage of the Google Form was the limitation in construction a rank-based question. The primary disadvantage of Survey Monkey was a cost of crafting a questionnaire with more than 10 questions.

23. Andy Brand's data was collected through the online Google form.

much opportunity for the respondent to add valuable information or answer questions not asked. This information was collected at the end of the questionnaire.

After the final question was asked and answered, I graciously thanked them for their time and expressed my sincere appreciation for the work they are doing in their ministry setting. Within the week following the interviews, I sent a thank you card which included a \$10 Starbucks gift card. When all of the interviews were completed, I sent each respondent a copy of their responses to validate.

### **Variables**

The intent of the survey design was to discover information about the primary point person, their ministry location, and their views of a discipleship-based rites of passage structure. In ascertaining such information, the survey was further divided up into the following nine sections, where each section held between one and eleven questions:

- Church demographics: such as affiliation, attendance, culture.
- Responsible Ministry Leader: length of service, position and responsibilities, influences in spiritual growth.
- Kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Ministry Setting: percentage of students that are public school, private school, or home schooled.
- Thinking about Discipleship: local church's definition of discipleship and their strategy.

- Rites of Passage Structure: what do Rites of Passage mean in their local church setting?
- Rites of Passage Implementation: what or who has informed their development of a rites of passage structure?
- Rites of Passage Evaluation: how does the local ministry context evaluate a rite of passage?
- Philosophical thoughts: concepts of childhood and adulthood.
- Final Question. Asking for any ideas or thoughts that were omitted from the interview.

Since this study is to produce an action-oriented result from a small sampling of best practices, the control for variables serves a relatively minor role as perhaps compared to a quantitative or scientific research study. It is because this study is not trying to control or predict behavior, “but rather to think, act, and reflect within a transformative cycle that brings about positive organizational change.”<sup>24</sup> However, curiosity forced me to think about potential areas of vulnerability in my methodology. For example, might the independent variables such as size of church, tenure of position, percentage of publicly/private/home-schooled kids, or personal influences shape the church’s ability to develop an integrated rites of passage approach to discipleship? The answer in the affirmative is highly likely, especially in an experiential and relational vocation such as

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24. Barry W. Hamilton, “A Model for Writing the Doctor of Ministry Thesis,” North Eastern Seminary, <http://religion.rdlcharr.com/getting-in-through-and-out-of-seminary-dissertation-writing-will-be-the-most-difficult-part-of-seminary-experience-the-dissertation-is-about-a-plan-or-project-you-will-bring-to-the-field-of-ministry/> (accessed June 1, 2015).

ministry. Yet, it is the acknowledgement of these possible confounds that could lead toward a misrepresentation of method or the boiler-plating of one ministry's idea into another ministry setting without the diligent thought of ministry uniqueness.

### **Conclusion**

Given all of the effort into studying the Scriptures, reviewing appropriate literature, and interacting with practitioners, the success of this project concerns itself whether it enables the local church to experience a greater dependency on God for personal and corporate identity as a result of incorporating of a rites of passage structure within ministry. If after all this effort, I am unable to help the local church better partner with parents in the development of their children's faith through the use of an intentional rites of passage structured along a discipleship pathway, then this project may be a practical failure.

However, I wholeheartedly believe that an honest critique of this argument will find merit for those who are family ministry practitioners and, more importantly, those who have already invested a great deal of prayer and study into the importance of spiritually infused rites of passages to guide our children toward adulthood. Although this thesis-project is a snapshot in time, it appears to be consistent with an evolving and growing movement.

Sometimes ministry leaders are so oriented towards pleasing people that blind spots develop over areas that require critical observation. This characteristic could challenge the reliability and validity of this project. Are the respondents providing

prescriptive data, data that potentially will lead to increase subjectivity, or are the respondents providing descriptive data, data that tends to lead toward more of an accurate accounting? Another challenge is to not construe their passion and exuberance for their ministry with bias. I expect that anyone I interview about a ministry concept they are excited will enhance their interpretation. Lastly and unfortunately, some ministries are defined by status quo, which may distort a realistic picture of their ongoing work.<sup>25</sup> These three situations have been accounted for in the construction of this study.

Although this study only sampled the views and practices of five practitioners, I believe that following these procedures again would produce similar results. These single conversations should not be considered as a complete and final picture. Rather, evaluations must be continual as a means to maintain relevancy. Not because there may be any significant deviation of results, but rather of a concept Solomon reminds us in the book of Proverbs, “iron sharpens iron.”<sup>26</sup>

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25. T.J. Addington, *High Impact Church Boards: How to Develop Healthy, Intentional, and Empowered Church Leaders* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 129.

26. Prov 27:17.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

It's just a PHASE, So don't miss it!

—2015 Orange Conference Theme

These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.

—Joshua 4:7c

One of the joys of working in ministry is the willingness of practitioners to share information, resources, and strategies.<sup>1</sup> Kingdom work is not the responsibility of one church, but of every follower of Jesus. Throughout this final chapter, we will be introduced to the point-person at each of the five exemplar churches. Their spiritual heritage, vocational experiences, and desire to see children mature into adulthood has produced valuable data that will provide insights into how these churches use rites of passages within their discipleship process.

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1. I am not suggesting that those that provide ministry resources should do so without compensation. See 1 Tim 5:17-18.



## **Data Overview**

To help analyze how churches included such a rite of passage structure within their discipleship pathway, it may be best to narrate this discovery through the following sections:

1. Point person's interest in rites of passage.
2. Markers towards adulthood.
3. Rites of passages within a family-based ministry.
4. Selecting and modifying established resources.
5. Illustrations.
6. Reflective evaluation.

### **Point Person's Interest in Rites of Passage**

Brian Swiggart is the Executive Pastor and Family Ministries Pastor at The Community at Lakeridge (TCAL) in Arlington Texas. A former youth pastor who graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1993 has been at his current assignment since 2008. Although the eight and one-half year-old TCAL has strong Southern Baptist roots, they operate as a non-denominational church. The median age of their 750+ congregants is early to mid-thirties with a blended Anglo, Hispanic, Asian, and African-American population. Brian describes his church as "nontraditional, contemporary, and seeker sensitive." The most effective thing this church is known for in their community is being a place that provides "Real Life, Real

Community, Casual Atmosphere, and Serious Faith.” They want guests and visitors to feel like “[they’re] home” and affirm TCAL’s value on family permeating its DNA.

Brian and his wife have three boys. When their oldest boy turned 13, they felt the necessity to celebrate this milestone with more than a usual party and cake. This desire led Brian to discover two formational books, *Bar Barakah* by Craig Hill and *Raising a Modern Day Knight* by Robert Lewis. These books served as the guide and inspiration for the Swiggarts to develop a rite of passage event with their 13-year-old and later with their other two boys. In fact, they even called their particular rite of passage celebration a “Barakah,” as homage to Craig Hill’s book.

This momentum was further fueled by attendance at the D6 conference. D6 is a family ministry focused conference that,

wants to change the statistics of students leaving the church after high school. Leaders, ministers, and leading parents who attend the conference will be challenged to help churches partner with parents to make disciples through the lens of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the foundational passage for biblical parenting.<sup>2</sup>

Usual speakers have included Mark Holman of the Faith@Home movement, Walker Moore, known for his *Rite of Passage Parenting: Four Essentials Experiences to Equip your Kids for Life*, and Lydia Randall who manages the Faith Path Initiative at LakePointe church in Rockwall, Texas. In the late 90’s Brian became connected to Kurt Bruner of Focus on the Family and co-developer of the previously mentioned Faith Path concept at LakePointe. Kurt suggested that Brian travel to Mark Holman’s church in Ventura, California to gain additional insight into understanding how a church can help facilitate

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2. D6 Family, “Frequently Asked Questions,” <http://d6family.com/d6-conference/> (accessed June 19, 2015).

rites of passages with their church families. The 2009 book, *Shift: What it Takes to Finally Reach Families Today*, by Brian Haynes was very pivotal for helping Brian formulate his vision. This eventually led TCAL partnering with LakePointe Church's HomePointe and Faith Path material. In fact, it is primarily to Brian that HomePointe directs interested churches for peer references.

Chelsea Bayne is the Family Ministry Coordinator at Grace Community Church in Clarksville, Tennessee. She has been in full-time ministry for three and one-half years, all at Grace Community. Grace Community, a non-denominational evangelical church of over 1000 in regular worship attendance, presents itself as a modern church, with a modern worship gathering characterized by the sort of atmosphere where, for example, "dimmed lights are common." Fort Campbell, a large army base, is located within their ministry area. The congregants are economically diverse, neighborhood-oriented, and suburban. The most distinctive element of Grace Community Church's community profile is related to how the church serves their community. They want to "love on the community, to make Clarksville a better place."

Chelsea's husband Michael also serves on staff as the executive pastor. Chelsea states that Michael was integral in "bringing me to be who God wants me to be, about faith and what it means to be a Christian." Her love for the Bible has been truly transformational in her life, as the Bible was not just a history book, but meant to change "who I am in Christ."

Focus on the Family, Brian Haynes and Jeremy Lee, the founder of the Rites of Passage Experience (ROPE) that functions as the backbone of ParentMinistry.net served

as the primary inspiration for Chelsea's desire to incorporate a rites of passage structure within their church strategy. Her background in special education further fueled her desire and understanding of how pivotal important moments are within life stages. Additionally, the D6 conference, Orange Content, and the Sticky Faith Initiative were very helpful toward her understanding of how rites of passages could be integrated into a ministry setting. Her qualifications and experience for incorporating these strategies into their church gave the Baynes the opportunity to develop the children's version of the Rites of Passage Experience for ParentMinistry.net.

Cindy Fiala, a 10-year veteran of vocational ministry, is the Family Ministry Pastor at Preston Trail Community Church in Frisco, Texas, just north of Dallas. Preston Trail is a seeker driven non-denominational evangelical church. Although their ministry area is primarily upper class Anglo, they are noticing trends of the neighborhood becoming more diverse. The church was started and is currently co-pastored by Paul Basden and Jim Johnson.

Jim previously attended church in Dunwoody, Georgia at the time Andy Stanley's emerging NorthPoint church was meeting in the same building. Jim asked for Andy's advice in starting a church and was presented with the idea to begin a church by offering regular *Family Experiences* as the primary gathering. In this context, a Family Experience is a place where kids bring their adults to learn about the big truths of God, somewhat like an extended children's worship.

Preston Trail began to grow; and their vision remained firmly rooted on reaching families. Recently, their church of nearly 2,000 participants went through a very

intentional church evaluative 'Auxano' campaign led by Will Mancini. The clarity derived from that process produced a very well defined sense of church mission and values, one of which is to "Think Family: Growing marriages and families are meant to last."

Cindy, now a grandmother, was not raised in a Christian home, yet it was "still a good *Leave it to Beaver*" home. Growing up, she never heard of anything called a youth group until a friend took her to a church-sponsored roller skating party. It was during this event that she gave her life to Jesus. For the next several years, she basically self-led her discipleship. Her primary entry point into church life was when she was asked to volunteer for a church ministry where she received invaluable mentoring from a widow. A few years after this, she sensed a deeper calling into ministry, while volunteering at Sagebrush Community Church based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, but was struggling if women could be in ministry. Her persistent calling and desire to serve led her to Preston Trail Community Church, who prioritized family ministry and championed women in ministry.

Her experiences in ministry and wisdom gained as a mother and grandmother offered her the unique platform to integrate the celebration of key life stage milestones within their church's ministry structure. For her, the LakePointe Faith Path model was revolutionary as it brought awareness of how a comprehensive system can be intertwined with a family ministry-based discipleship strategy. Cindy also found inspiration from the Canadian material of Focus on the Family, Brian Haynes' Legacy Milestones, Mark Holman's Faith@Home, Sticky Faith Initiative, material from Jim Burns, and most recently, Orange. In the spring of 2015, Orange began to roll out their

version of a rites of passages structure. Their concept revolves around the idea of various important *Phases* or a “time frame in a kid’s life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future.”<sup>3</sup> In helping to reveal this idea, Orange used Preston Trail as the example of how *Phases* can be integrated into a discipleship pathway.

Danny Howard is the Pastor to Students at Parker Hill Community Church, a non-denominational evangelical multi-site church based in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Danny describes his church as “missional and attractional, relevant to the culture without compromising truth.” Their ministry area has a strong Roman Catholic presence and they believe the most effective thing their church is known for is their “generosity in the community.”

Danny recently graduated from Summit University with a degree in student ministry. His mentor in college helped shaped his vision and call for ministry. Additionally, his four years of being on staff at Parker Hill overlapped that of Darren Kizer, who for a Doctorate of Ministry project helped to develop their church’s rites of passage structure. Darren is now with the ReThink organization and helps to produce Orange material. Danny’s investigation into the Orange strategy for ministry and the Sticky Faith Initiative were very helpful for his understanding of how to better equip parents to navigate their students through the various life stage transitions.

Andy Broad recently resigned from six years of ministry as Student Ministries Pastor at Eastern Hills Wesleyan in Williamsville, New York to accept a similar position in

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3. Reggie Joiner and Kristen Ivy, *It’s Just a Phase, So Don’t Miss it: Why every life stage of a kid matters and at least 13 things your church should do about it* (Cumming, GA: Orange, 2015), 10.

New Brunswick, Canada. Eastern Hills is of the Holiness Evangelical tradition, a traditional congregation of over a thousand that is primarily composed of white upper class people. Andy believes that Eastern Hills is best known in their community as a church that “shows generosity in the community.” His reading of *Sticky Faith* by Kara Powell, *Shift* by Brian Haynes, and *Think Orange* by Reggie Joiner were listed as the primary books that have informed his thinking and development of a rite of passage structure.

### **Markers towards Adulthood**

The reason that some churches have begun to engage in the systematic practice of initiating spiritually infused rites of passages is to help children take their next step toward biblical adulthood. This requires a church to have some formulated thoughts of what childhood and adulthood are as well as how they differ. Each of the survey respondents communicated an aspect that most people would believe to be true:

An individual is no longer a child when...

- “They are 26; that is when their frontal lobe stops developing.”
- “They recognize and own their faith and responsibility for their actions.”
- “They reach a level of maturity.”
- “They begin to make their own sphere of influence.”
- “They are responsible for themselves financially.”

An individual is an adult when...

- “They live life responsibly.”
- “They are no longer obligated to their parents.”
- “They launch out of the home.”
- “When they are forty, ‘just kidding.’ When they move out of the house.”
- “Financial independence is understood.”

As was discussed in Chapter One, identifying the beginning points of adulthood has no consistent response. When the respondents were asked, “what age would you consider most people of that age to be an adult?” Their responses were also widely ranged: 25, 18, 23, 19, and 18.

Each one of their responses showed a particular ideology that drives the pursuit toward adulthood. One respondent felt that biology was the primary factor in that adulthood is achieved by the biological means of the brain’s frontal lobe development. A second respondent linked a cultural factor such as military obligation or voting responsibilities as the major factor. A third respondent felt that religious faith determined their ability to assume adulthood responsibilities, and another respondent cited economics, the ability to be financially independent, as the primary factor determining those that are an adult. The experiences of these respondents demonstrated opinions regarding adulthood status are not determined by a single variable, but the interrelatedness of several factors.



Each one of the respondents has been in full-time paid ministry for at least 3.5 years, with an average (mean) of 9.1 years. Their professional observations significantly informed their perspective on what becoming an adult may constitute. Further, their particular responses may have been guided by a recent observation where an adolescent was manifesting a particular biological, cultural, economic, or religious factor in a noticeable fashion, causing that particular factor to stand out.

Biologically, many adults are aware when puberty starts, either by changes in the voice, development of secondary sex characteristics, or increase of body hair. One of our respondents, whose educational background is in special education, was aware of the development and function of the frontal lobe, which determines the ability to match future consequences with current actions. This frontal lobe does not fully develop until the mid-twenties.

Culturally, our American society communicates adulthood status by the venues by which an individual has access. Movie theaters, bars, voting booths make up a growing list of places that an individual is able to enter at a certain age. One of our respondents identified this factor with military service and voting. Although many parents have cried that “we are sending our children off to war,” that is a word choice based more on sentiment than reality. Yes they are someone’s child, but our parents and society understand they are a young generation of adults, adults who had a choice and made a choice to serve their country.

Economically, adulthood status is recognized by one’s ability to manage their resources. I remember leading our students through a youth-focused Dave Ramsey

curriculum a few years ago titled “Generation Change.” One of the memories I have of that series was a lesson on the compounding nature of interest. The illustration portrays two friends: Ben and Arthur. Ben begins investing \$2000 a year at age 19 for eight years. Arthur begins investing \$2000 a year at age 27 every year. Although Ben will only invest \$16,000 over a period of eight years as compared to Arthur’s \$78,000 investment over 39 years, Ben will enter into his retirement years with roughly \$700,000 more.<sup>4</sup> I have used similar examples in the college level math courses I teach and I suggest to the students that understanding the nature of compound interest is something every adult should be able to comprehend and explain. I think Dave Ramsey would agree. Having a job, understanding a disciplined approach toward money management and becoming “financially independent” as one of the respondents remarked are evidences of adulthood.

Students with observable faith convictions are often assumed by adults to be more capable to handle greater degree of responsibilities. In the Southern Baptist tradition, most churches historically relied on “believer’s baptism” as the primary requirement for church membership. Membership is not based on age or accomplishment. Although believer’s baptism signifies a very important decision to repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, it secondarily signifies an individual’s desire to mature spiritually.

Within each one of these factors: biological, cultural, economic, or religious, there are many situations or events that can be considered a marker of adulthood. Yet, rarely

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4. This particular illustration is assuming a 12% annual interest rate.

will anyone confer adult status to an individual for acquiring a single marker. For the general adult population, an individual must accumulate numerous markers across the four factors. Then, for those within a faith community, there is an additional consideration of understanding these markers within a biblical worldview. Each church in this study has identified various markers from birth through graduation and incorporated their acquirement as a component of discipleship.

Fundamentally, what has been described is a rite of passage, an event that produces a socially understood transition. Yet the term 'rite of passage' is not the only term used in many of the churches that are incorporating these markers into a catalyst for discipleship. Our respondents use other words or phrases such as: 'moments,' 'faith paths,' 'milestones' or 'phases' as their key descriptors. These responses may correspond to what the rite of passage means to them:

- "A rite of passage is a very intentional time between a parent and child that focuses on a developmental stage."
- "A unique moment in the life of a child that a parent can intentionally disciple their child."
- "Stages of growing in your faith, usually reference to students. A specific celebration of a 'coming of age' event."
- "Manhood event - this is what it means to be a man. Having the 'talk' with the kid."
- "Identifying key phases in a child's life where the church can come alongside the family to help them celebrate and invest in their child."

Combined, all the statements touch on various ideas associated with a rite of passage: There is a unique moment, usually associated with a developmental stage, in which the child and parent can interact in an intentional way to produce growth in faith or change in status.

### **Rites of Passages within a Family-Based Ministry.**

Although this thesis-project was not a direct study into family ministry, it is evident from the five churches that were selected for research, that their desire to enact various rites of passage events within their church's discipleship strategy was a result of their church's desire to rethink family ministry. The concept of family ministry is not new; it was for years thought of as successive segments of programming. This model produced a department-based mindset that would usually create separate programming for the preschool, children, and youth department. This has been the dominant model in every church that I have attended or worked with. Unfortunately, for many churches, this framework allows ministries to disconnect from each other.

Two primary consequences of this are the lack of coordination between age-graded ministries or departments and the loss of focus on helping parents disciple their children. In 1994, Mark DeVries wrote *Family-Based Youth Ministry*.<sup>5</sup> This book helped draw attention to the dangers of segregating church programming. DeVries' voice, along with many others, called for a refocused youth ministry to work more closely with

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5. Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry: Revised and Expanded*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2004).

parents. The problems we as youth ministers were trying to solve had limited solutions, because we were not taking into account the “powerful forces of family and culture.”<sup>6</sup>

This shift away from segregated programming and towards a family-based mindset was clearly evident with the churches of this study, as each point person was part of a family ministry team and three of the point persons were the family ministry pastor or family ministry coordinator.

A primary benefit of this shift toward empowering the family has been to view children on one continuous path from birth to adulthood, rather than three separate segments that map out their preschool, children, and youth years irrespective of each other. These churches selected developmentally-appropriate Bible study curriculum to use on a weekly basis within their specific environments. In addition, they began to look for unique moments that occur throughout the entire life span as a mechanism to help parents capitalize on a memorable and meaningful time in life and coordinate it with a spiritual truth. It is the transitions these unique moments represent that I have identified for general purposes as *rites of passages*. Not all rites of passages that were discussed in this research occur in the adolescent years. Some happen prior to puberty, but are nonetheless important for helping to shape family culture and expectations. It is the intentionality of how these churches spiritually infused and coordinated these moments that set them apart for this thesis-project to study.

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6. Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 173.

### **Selecting and Modifying Established Resources.**

It is not uncommon for many churches to develop some specific rites of passages for the spiritual benefit of either the individual or the family. For example, every year, my current church invites parents to dedicate their children, asks those that repent and trust in Jesus Christ to be baptized, celebrate the transition into youth ministry, and acknowledge the accomplishment of high school graduation. Although these events primarily engage the individual or the family, they secondarily engage the church body. However, what is usually neglected with these markers is any continuity with each other and their holistic relationship to a discipleship pathway. Each event can be wonderful and spiritually rewarding experience; however, when they are viewed independently they lack the powerful accumulating effect markers could serve as points on a map towards adulthood.

This is very much a programmatic way of viewing ministry that can isolate preschool, children, and youth ministry from each other. Many churches do not have the time or resources to develop the structure that connects these life stage moments into a discipleship pathway. The best these churches can do is put a curriculum in a leader's hand for weekly Sunday School. Fewer churches have the leadership capacity to take this a step further by seeking out the best resources available and then modify them to best meet the local needs. In the rare event that such a resource does not exist and is crucial to the discipleship of its people, then the leaders are capable enough to craft a resource or two from scratch. Even fewer churches still have the capacity to develop entire curriculums that meets the expanding ministry demands in their context.

Four of the five exemplar churches have chosen an existing rites of passage model as their foundation. The one outlier was Parker Hill, as some of their original work was incorporated into the Orange strategy as it relates to their rites of passage concept. Although Preston Trail's existing structure was used to illustrate Orange's strategy, Cindy Fiala is waiting on and allowing Orange to further develop their rites of passage strategy because of the comprehensiveness and curricular alignment that is already established at Preston Trail. Chelsea and Michael Bayne developed the children's version for ParentMinistry.net's Rite of Passage Experience while they were already using the existing ROPE material developed for youth. As mentioned earlier, The Community at Lakeridge is a partner with HomePointe's Faith Path strategy and uses their exhaustive resources as a foundation for their local adaptation. Lastly, Eastern Hills' strategy is based on and uses the 'Legacy Milestone' language that Brian Haynes developed.

### **Illustrations**

A significant hurdle that these churches had to overcome dealt with how to communicate and illustrate their rites of passage infused discipleship pathway. One ingenious way was to develop a 'family ministry map.' As described in Chapter Four, a family ministry map is a visual representation of a child's progression from birth through graduation intersecting various age-graded ministries and life stage milestones. My first experience seeing these two components visually integrated within a family ministry

context was when I was presented with National Community Church's version at the 2014 Orange Conference (Figure 27).

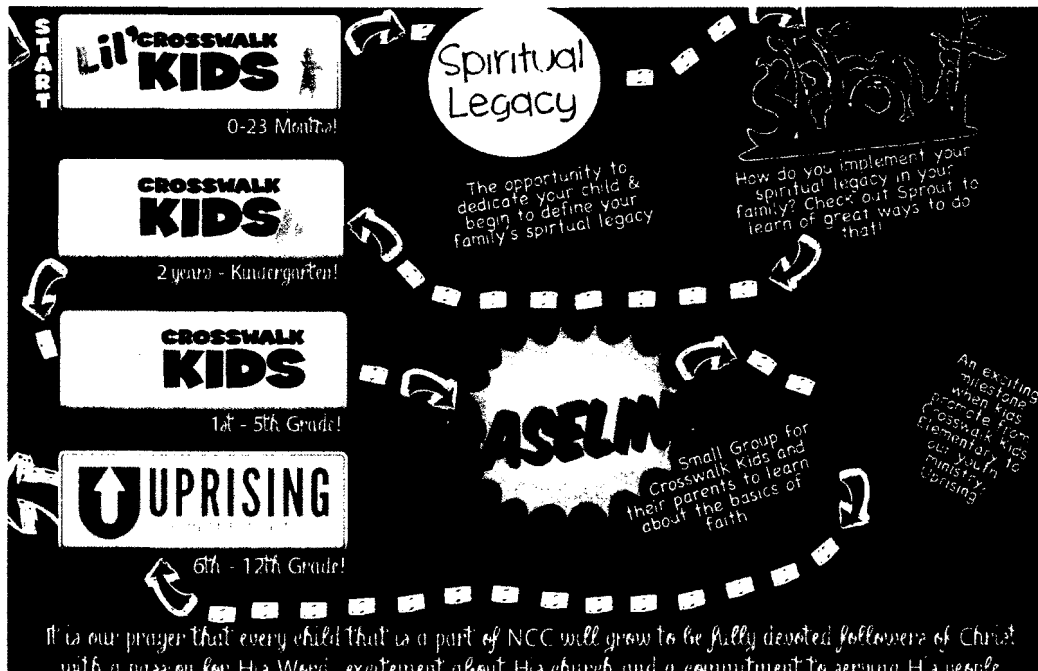


Figure 27. National Community Church's Ministry Map

National Community's family ministry map highlights the journey through the various age-graded departments with the demarcation of specific milestones along the way. Their milestones include:

- 'Spiritual Legacy' – The opportunity to dedicate your child and begin to define your family's spiritual legacy,
- 'Sprout' – Guidance towards helping the parent implement spiritual legacy in the family,



- 'Baseline' – A small group for elementary kids and their parents to learn about the basics of faith,
- 'Promote-up' – The milestone when kids promote from elementary to youth.

This family ministry map communicated three important aspects of a rite of passage structure within a church: A unique or significant life stage moment, a spiritual application or truth, and a marker on a journey toward adulthood.

It is likely that National Community's family ministry map was not the first one a church constructed to visualize this spiritually infused rites of passage journey toward adulthood, but it was the first one I had seen. As a result, this led to my curiosity to see how the five exemplar churches were visually communicating their strategy.

It was discovered that both Parker Hill and Preston Trail use a similar method to communicate their rite of passage structure. Parker Hill calls their version a 'Family Map' (Figure 28). Their map does not specifically include where the weekly age-graded programming occurs.<sup>7</sup> However, their family map does portray a wandering path toward adulthood. It doesn't note that one has arrived at adulthood, as that is not the intent. Rather it portrays a path that advances with age toward adulthood. The Parker Hill version includes recognition of milestones that can be developed into faith markers, which has components that are driven primarily by the home and components that are driven by Parker Hill. What is very interesting in this visualization is the dotted line representing the portions of the pathway where the child chooses their friends and the areas where the parents primarily choose their friends. One can also see the ambiguity

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7. This may be a result of the fluidity of when their particular milestones may occur.

of this choice between the markers for puberty and dating. This is similar to what Victor Turner noticed in transitional stages that there sometimes appears to be elements of two statuses at once.

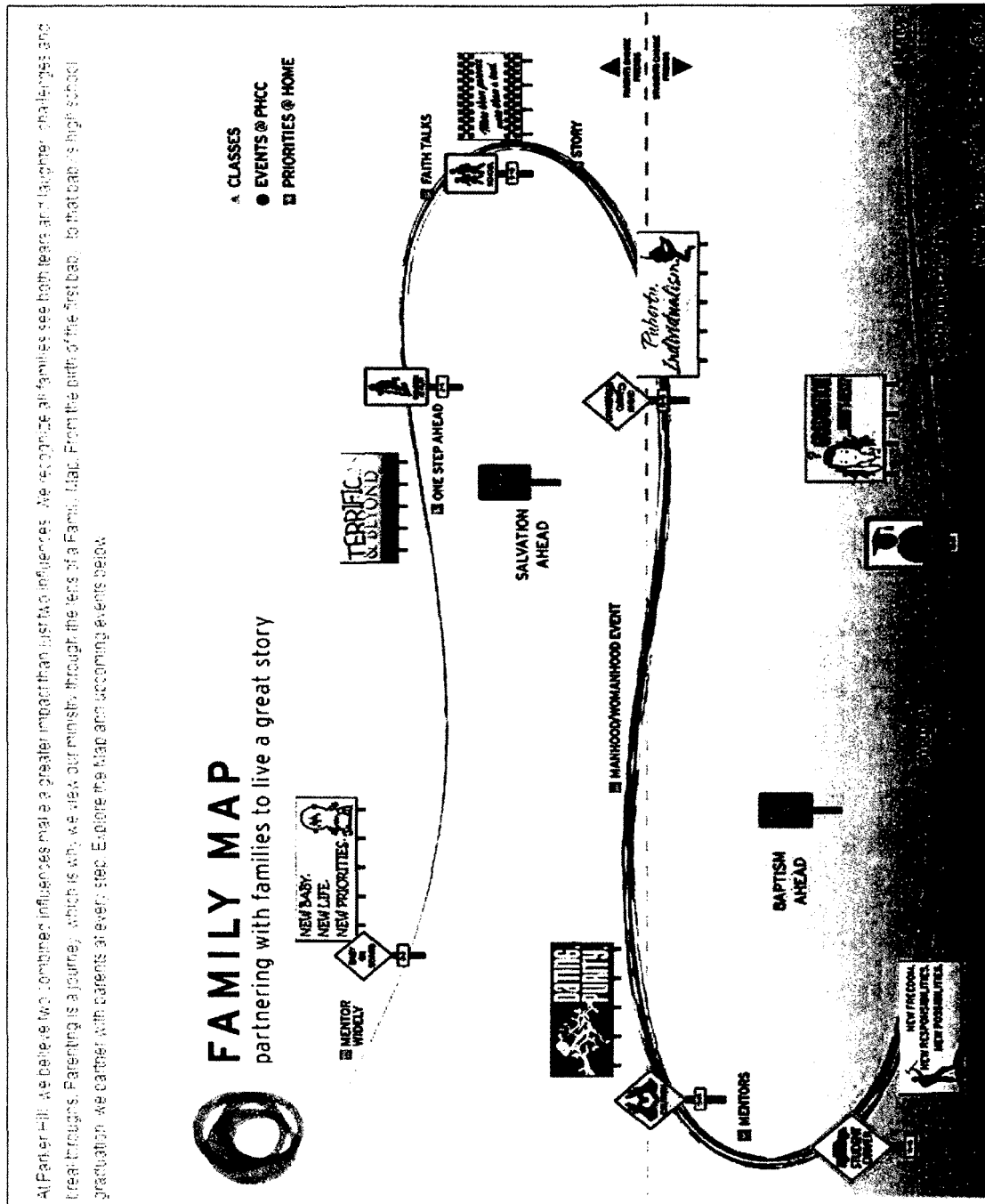


Figure 28. Parker Hill Community Church's Family Map

Preston Trail Community Church calls their representation a 'Phase Timeline' (Figure 29). Their timeline also portrays a path that leads toward adulthood marked by the progression of age. This current timeline includes their age-graded programming and a placement for six milestones: Baby dedication, First day of school, Trust Jesus, Coming of Age, Driver's License, and Graduation. As I mentioned earlier, this particular phase timeline was created to illustrate the areas the Orange strategy is addressing. According to family ministry experts Reggie Joiner and Kristen Ivy, this phase timeline will also include relational, moral, mental, and physical identifiers along the pathway.<sup>8</sup> Emphasizing these elements will have two benefits. First will provide a reminder of the interrelatedness of developmental factors, and second it may subsequently address the postmodern shift of elevating the needs of the adult over the needs of the child.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Reggie Joiner and Kristen Ivy, *It's Just a Phase*, 73.

9. David Elkind, *All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capp Press, 1998), xiii.

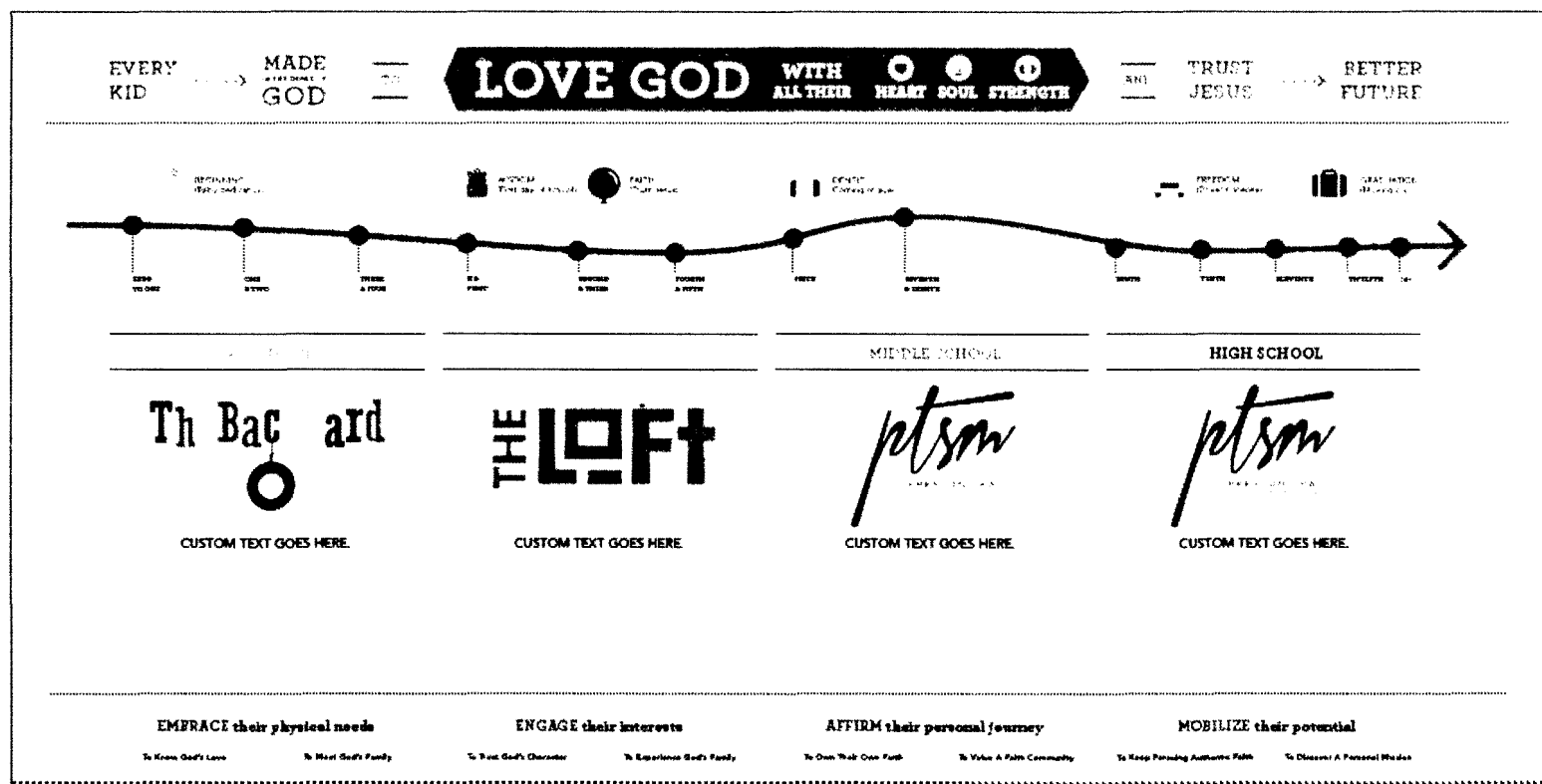


Figure 29: Preston Trail Community Church's Phase Timeline

Grace Community church redirects a portion of their website to the Rites of Passage Experience content developed by ParentMinistry.net. Although there is no visualized journey similar to what the previous maps communicate, a progression is still illustrated through identifying successive elementary school years (Figure 30).<sup>10</sup> The Baynes make these resources available to the families for their use.

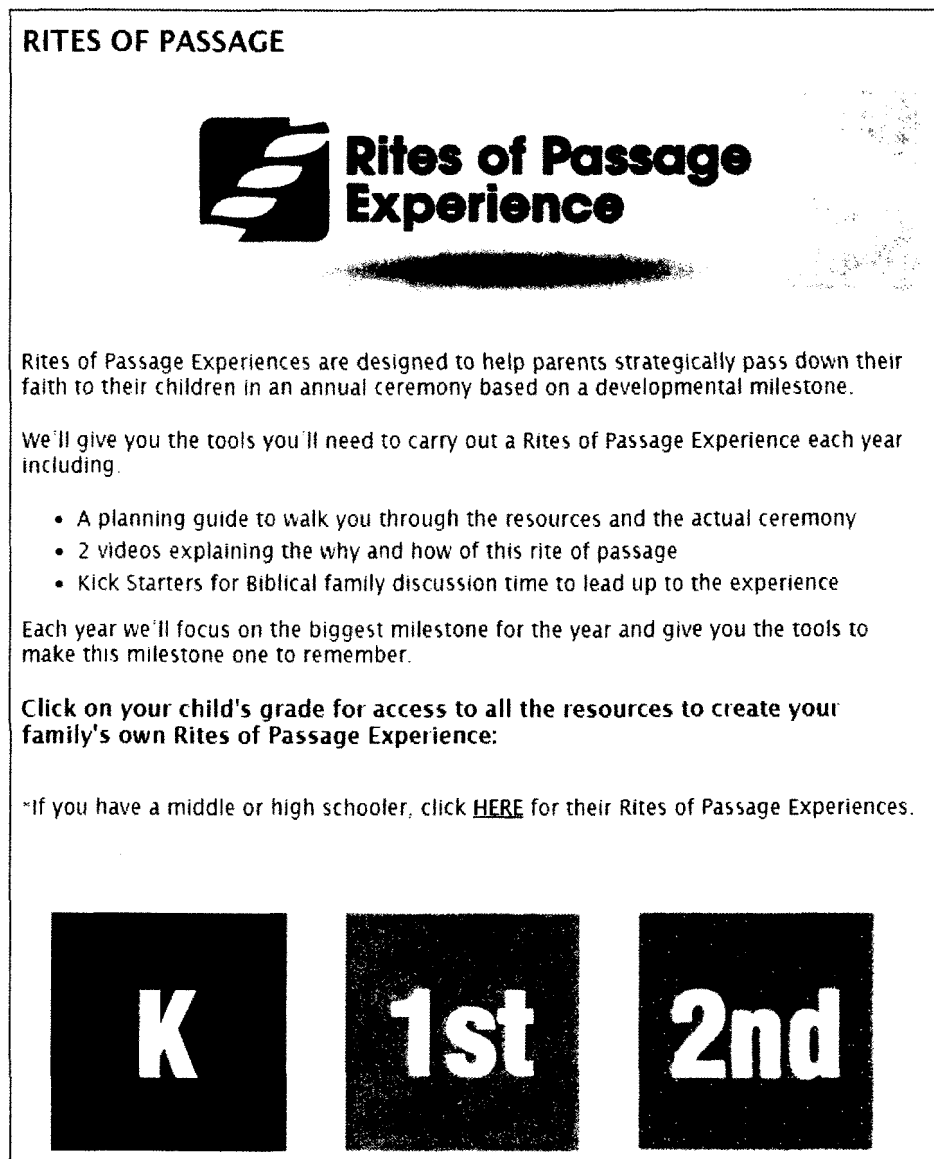


Figure 30. Website Screen Shot of Grace Community Church's Rites of Passage.

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10. Grace Community Church, "Rite of Passage," <http://www.gcomchurch.com/ritesofpassage> (accessed June 25, 2015).

Eastern Hills also uses their website as the central area to communicate their rites of passage structure (Figure 31).<sup>11</sup> They communicate the progression of the seven 'Legacy Milestones' that Brian Haynes developed and either link to the curriculum resources or to the church's programming for one of the milestones.



Figure 31. Website Screen Shot of Eastern Hills

Lastly, The Community at Lakeridge is partnering with the HomePointe Faith Path resources. This strategy is built on a physical presence within the church building, so that interested families may visit and select resources such as helping a child choose

11. Eastern Hills Community Church, "Next Gen Milestones," <http://www.easternhillschurch.org/next-gen/milestones> (accessed June 25, 2015).

a Bible, dealing with anxiety, transitioning schools, etc. (Figure 32). Additionally, this model illustrates the Faith Path as a walking path made of several key stones (Figure 33).



Figure 32. Faith Path Foyer Presence.

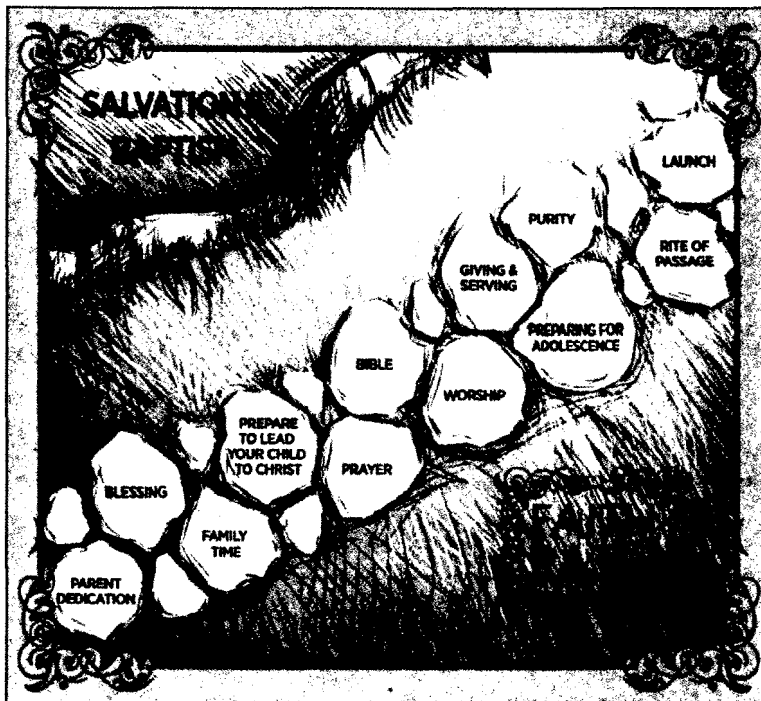


Figure 33. HomePointe's Faith Path Model.

## Reflective Evaluation

In Chapter Three, I identified a large sampling of possible life stage milestones that can be used to develop a faith marker. Although this list is by no means exhaustive, they do represent the totality of life stage milestones the five exemplar churches are drawing from. The following table illustrates the rite of passage events the exemplar churches have engaged prior to the 2014-2015 ministry year, events they have included in their 2014-2015 ministry year, and events they hope to include in their 2015-2016 ministry year (Figure 34).

	Grace	Preston Trail	TCAL	Parker Hill	Eastern Hills
<b>Baby Dedication</b>	Existing	Existing	Existing	Existing	Existing
<b>Preschool to Elementary Transition</b>	Existing	2014-2015		Existing	Existing
<b>Elementary to Middle School Transition</b>	Existing			Existing	Existing
<b>Middle School to High School Transition</b>		2015-2016		Existing	Existing
<b>High School Graduation</b>	Existing			Existing	Existing
<b>Transition beyond High School</b>			Existing	Existing	
<b>Gap year</b>					
<b>Children's Bible Presentation</b>	Existing				
<b>Confirmation</b>					
<b>Conversion, or Salvation</b>	Existing	Existing	Existing	Existing	Existing
<b>Baptism</b>	Existing	Existing	Existing	Existing	Existing
<b>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</b>					
<b>"Coming of Age"</b>	Existing	2015-2016	Existing		
<b>Quinceanera</b>					
<b>Purity / "True Love Waits"</b>	Existing		Existing		Existing
<b>Obtaining a Driver's License</b>	Existing	2015-2016		Existing	2015-2016
<b>Getting a first Job</b>	Existing "We call it Finances"				
<b>Manhood/Womanhood</b>	Existing		Existing		

Figure 34. Exemplar Church's programmed Rites of Passage experiences.



Although it is not uncommon for many churches to resource or engage several of these rite of passage events, the difference is that the exemplar churches are coordinating and evaluating these events systematically, rather than individually. Unfortunately, none of these churches are equipped to develop a data rich longitudinal study that tracks each cohort from birth through graduation.<sup>12</sup> Rather, these churches are only equipped to evaluate their systematic success more anecdotally, through the collection of stories, which in of itself is a massive undertaking. For example, Grace Community Church asks parents if they are having “hard conversations in the home, significant spiritual conversations.” The ministry staff is trained to have regular conversations with parents, specifically asking about the quantity and quality of at-home spiritual conversations.

Preston Trail also evaluates its engagement of the systematic use of rites of passages through the stories they seek out. “We are intentionally asking a lot of questions, asking why.” Their preschool personnel has significant amount of equity with the parents, which has created a culture of story, which allows the fluidity of asking questions and evaluating the rite of passage event through these one-on-one interactions. In fact, this culture of story exists at all levels within their family ministry department. They are asking questions through social media, asking questions about what is working and what is not. Finally, their church discipleship strategy is based on a

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12. Incidentally, James Cote has argued that “the most effective way to change a culture is to alter [its] ‘coming of age’ processes on a cohort basis, so that the intended changes are introduced to the most impressionable and vulnerable members of society.” James Cote, *Arrested Adulthood: The Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity* (New York: University Press, 2000), 163.

group life model and many new groups form as a result of their baby dedication experience.

The primary barrier these churches had to overcome in order for a rites of passage concept to gain momentum in their ministry settings was not a matter of acquiring or developing the resources, but of motivating the populations to engage. The communication of stories provides a great corrective, but the churches still acknowledge that informing parents is difficult. Grace Community Church struggles with “how to put information in [the parents] hands.” Eastern Hills struggled with launching some of their various events with low attendance. Preston Trail’s primary struggle was a result of timing. Their church was in the midst of a building project and reorganization to fully develop the age-graded ministries. The unintended consequence “required a pause and loss of momentum.”

### **Reflections on the Research Process**

The research of this thesis-project relied heavily on interviewing five people with whom I had no previous relationship or connection. This is why I took great care in how I would first approach each church. I did not want to scare anyone off by having a first interaction over the phone. I know how I feel when my busy day is interrupted with an incoming call from someone I do not know or am not expecting. Ministry leaders get solicitations every week from a vendor or third party ministry. Because of my aversion to receiving such calls, I did not want to potentially be the cause of someone’s similar displeasure.

Although I wouldn't change the process I used to make and follow-up with contact, I might have changed the medium for the actual interaction. Each interaction was over a voice phone. A colleague of mine suggested that I should try to incorporate a Skype or Facetime chat during the interviewing process for a more personal session. In doing so, our visual cues may have communicated much deeper our personal interest with the subject matter and subsequently mitigated any feelings that the intent of the interview was solely to mine for data. I have so much to learn in this ministry application and it is important that the contacts I have made can serve as future networking partners.

The process to collect data, voicemail, email, phone contact, online questionnaire, and a thank you, was explained in greater detail in Chapter Four. It was the process I invoked of my first contact, Andy Brand of Eastern Hills. This process worked great as I only needed to provide one gentle follow-up reminder email a week later.<sup>13</sup> He completed the questionnaire and emailed me to let me know of his completion. The remaining four sets of data were collected over the phone.

The unintended consequence of this change in strategy was that one of the questions was of no use, as its structure was tabular in nature which was best answered in print. The intent of the question was to gain relative importance of 12 ministry strategies in which a church may engage by asking the respondent to rank the 12. Had my original plan been to construct a phone interview questionnaire, I would have

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13. However, it became increasingly difficult to make an initial connection with the remaining ministers of the study and my concern increased due to the possibility of not collecting data in a timely manner.

rewritten this question, possibly as a series of “what’s more important to your ministry strategy?”<sup>14</sup> For example:

- Are service projects more important than your rite of passage system?
- Are camps more important than your rite of passage system?
- Are mission trips more important than your rite of passage system?
- Is your small group structure more important than your rite of passage system?
- Are church sports more important than your rite of passage system?

The final and most lasting impact of this thesis-project is the wisdom that has been gained to articulate and implement a comprehensive rites of passage system on the local church level. My weakness was not about structure, presentation, resources, or implementation. Rather my weakness was the lack of long-term experience that can best be gained from having such a system in place for a period of time. In the absence of this, the next best thing was to learn what the churches that are doing it well are learning and have learned.

### **Proposals for Further Research**

The third aspect of a successful rite of passage experience is the reincorporation of the individual back into a community of those that have previously transitioned

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14. I would suspect that most of these five churches would have ranked their rite of passage structure slightly less important than their age-graded Bible studies and adult worship, but more important than their attendance at camps or involvement in a church sports league. However, that is only speculation.

themselves. Much work is being doing by these churches to prepare the individual and the family for this status change, but less is being done to prepare the awaiting community. Kenda Dean, among others, noted that a rite of passage event is only successful when the individual has been accepted by the community as having a shared status.<sup>15</sup> The onus here is not on the individual, but on the community to incorporate the individual to their world as one that now has a shared status.

Further proposals can be done that would equip those that have previously completed a rite of passage to accept the newly arrived. Maybe the best example of this revolves around the most important faith marker, that of conversion. Each of the exemplar churches have created and developed outstanding programs and resources that appropriately prepare (before) and guide (during) the individual and family through the salvation process. However, there is little preparation for the awaiting community to accept and encourage the individual after the transition and view their transition as fully legitimate. My experiences as a youth pastor bear this out every time an adolescent becomes a Christian. The adult population within the church has no difficulty praising God's hand in adding another to the Kingdom, yet they often fail to see their personal responsibility to help solidify this transition. Rather, the common belief is that the primary responsibility remains with the individual, family, or the youth group to model what this new status looks like.

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15. See Chapter three.

## Summary

As we begin to synthesize this data into a practical discipleship pathway, it would be prudent to again see this transitional concept illustrated. Figure 35 illustrates van Gennep's model for a rite of passage. The path describes a transition from a previous status to a later status, such that the new status is socially progressed in relation to the previous status.

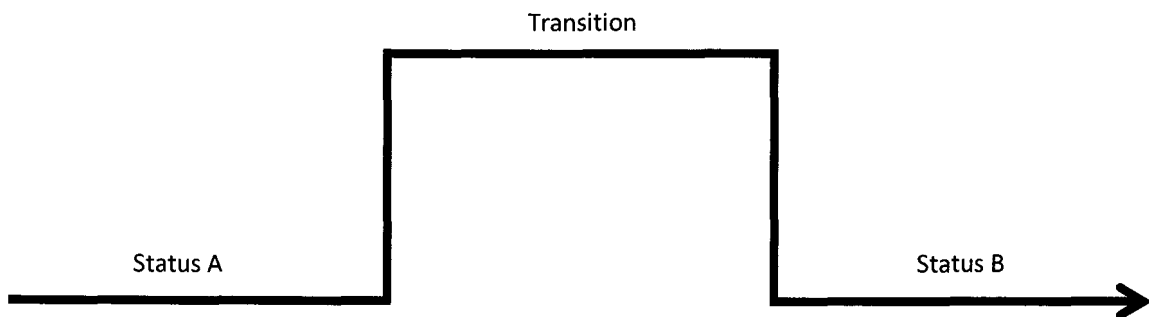


Figure 35. Arnold van Gennep's Rite of Passage Model

Next is my interpretation which equates a rite of passage achievement as the acquisition of a faith marker. As illustrated in Figure 36, a faith marker is acquired when a significant milestone marks the onset of a biological, cultural, economic, or religious transition and is coordinated with a spiritual truth so that the individual rejoins society with a new spiritually infused understanding of their relationship to a society that has already acquired that faith marker. For example, if a faith marker was developed as a result of the biological mark of puberty, or 'coming of age,' and this milestone was understood in terms of a biblical perspective of identity development, such as identity is measured in God's image, and this transition was celebrated and encouraged by those

that have already established their identity in Christ,<sup>16</sup> then the individual would have acquired a faith marker.

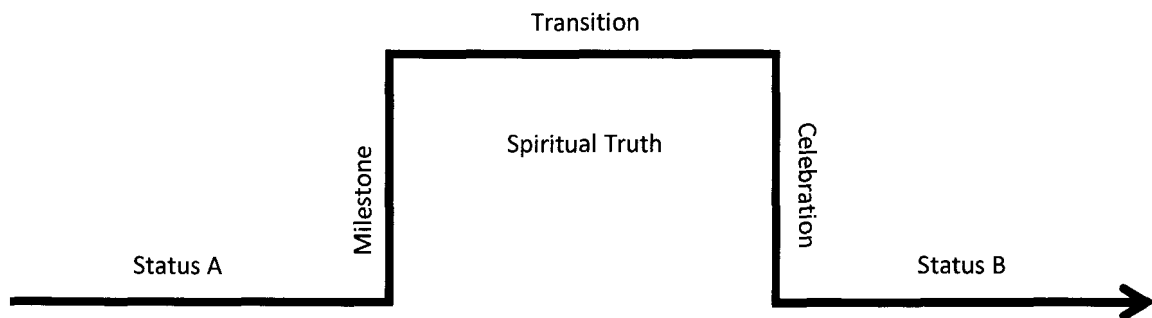


Figure 36. Faith Marker

It is the accumulation of such faith markers that is the premise of this thesis-project and it is the intentional incorporation of developing these faith markers which serves as anchors and beacons within the church's discipleship pathway (Figure 37).

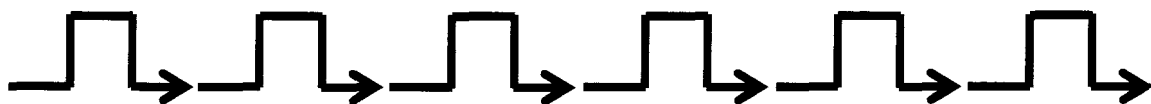


Figure 37. Discipleship Pathway

### Observation and Recommendation for First Baptist Church of Beaverton

Each of the five exemplar churches not only have provided invaluable insight to the construction of this thesis-project, but also have provided invaluable insight as I continue to develop the curricular structure for a rites of passage system for First

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16. This may make one wonder if this is one of the reasons why it is so hard to establish a culture of producing faith markers in a congregation. Many parents themselves don't have their identity situated in Christ.

Baptist Church of Beaverton. I fully believe that a significant reason that adolescents emerge into adulthood with a weak faith is because they did not have a spiritually mature adult capable of speaking spiritual truth and application during one of the critical life stage milestones. Rather, these students were left to wrestle with the complexities and uncertainties of these transitions without being reminded or having the confidence that their identity rests on Christ alone.

I am not proposing that the creation of faith markers will guarantee faith development because people still have the choice to not follow God's direction, but I am suggesting that the construction of key faith markers along the journey will accomplish three potential benefits: establishing a faith marker will celebrate our *history* and reminds us of God's faithfulness. A faith marker will clarify the uncertainties of our *now* by reminding us that we are created in God's image, and a faith marker will point the way toward the *future*, offering confidence to trust God's promises. The accumulation of faith markers helps us see our story within God's story.

Just as the Lord said to Joshua,

choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place you stay tonight...Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them...These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Josh 4:1-7



### FBCBeaverton's Faith Markers

The faith markers FBCBeaverton will develop for the 2015-2016 ministry year will continue to mark a baby dedication, trust in Jesus, and graduation. In the 2014-2015 ministry year we were fortunate to acknowledge the graduation (Figure 38) of four of our students, one of whom, Tarin Fox, was also dedicated by FBCBeaverton in 1998 (Figure 39) and celebrated his conversion/baptism in 2012 (Figure 40).



Figure 38. FBCBeaverton's 2015 Graduation Recognition. From *Left to Right*: Kento Uda, Allyson Fulps, Reanna Smithey, and Tarin Fox.



Figure 39. FBCBeaverton's 1998 Baby Dedication. Pictured *center* is the Fox family.



Figure 40. Tarin Fox's 2012 Baptism. Performed by Senior Pastor Norm Langston.

Additionally, we will incorporate into our discipleship pathway a specific event that will create a faith marker associated with their first day in school and repurpose our

‘Adventure 526’ as a marker coordinating the onset of puberty with the biblical concept of being created and formed in the image of God.<sup>18</sup> We will also begin the process to develop a faith marker associated with our adolescents’ ability to obtain a driver’s license that helps them to realize expanding freedom is a stewardship of responsible independence. Although, I have previously developed resources and events that mark other life stage moments, I want to accept some of the wisdom gained from my interview with Preston Trail’s Cindy Fiala.

While leading her team through a process to determine which life stage markers to help facilitate, their internal discussion centered on concerns of quantity. Both ParentMinistry.net and HomePointe have developed a rite of passage experience or faith step for every year K-12.<sup>19</sup> Cindy’s concern, which I share in my context, is one of overload. We both don’t want to make the celebration of too many moments reduce the significance of the big moments. Additionally, I want to help parents strategically use their time at home, and for many of our people, that is providing a reduced quantity of options with a high quality of interaction.

Although our current discipleship structure includes many of the desired elements, it has not been illustrated or presented in a usable form that communicates

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18. Adventure 526 is an elementary to middle school transition event. This event begins with parent approved ‘kidnapping’ from the home, a morning of looking for Thunder Eggs at a local rock ranch, an afternoon of swimming, culminating with an evening barbeque and family ceremony acknowledging the emerging adolescent’s increased responsibility of spiritual awareness.

19. Neither HomePointe nor ParentMinistry.net are suggesting the user must celebrate each of their yearly markers. Rather, they provide the material that a church can modify.

our church's desire to help the family better disciple their child as they mature toward biblical adulthood. As a result of this thesis-project:

- Presenting a comprehensive discipleship process highlighting rites of passages will best be suited through the development of a ministry map.
- I have been granted permission to build off and develop the resources and concepts that the exemplars have either originated or modified.
- FBCBeaverton will continue its partnership with the Orange Strategy and begin to incorporate their curricular resources to supplement our gaps in rites of passage development.
- Our families will have a clear picture of the developmental timeline their child is on and how FBCBeaverton is prepared to partner with them in the faith formation of their children.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis-project has provided an avenue to explore how some churches are working with families by facilitating various rites of passages so that the emerging generation is transitioning from adolescence into adulthood with a stabilized and growing faith. The following list represents my findings.

- As van Gennep suggested, a rite of passage is a process that gives an individual a new social status as identified and accepted by those that hold that social status. The most notable of these are 'coming of age' events that serve as bridges from childhood to adulthood, or outsider to insider. However, sometimes it is the

particular act of separation or act of reincorporation that, for many, represent the totality of a rite of passage. For example, many people see the act of baptism as the culmination of a salvation experience rather than a transitioning moment on their spiritual journey. Because the focus of a rite of passage can easily be set on an event and not the receiving community's capacity to socially accept the initiates new status, rites of passages are susceptible to being devalued in their ability to be an agent of transition toward a greater certainty or maturity within their development.

- Rites of passages are susceptible to becoming stale. If the focus is removed from the transformed identity, then the event becomes entitlement. Of course this is true for any program, concept or event. We see this many times in the church where a once successful ministry or program produces diminishing results because it lost its missional purpose. The corrective to ensure that rites of passages maintain freshness is that the particular event is connected to the larger mission of the ministry or church. A rite of passage event must lead somewhere; for a church ministry, the destination is a stabilized and growing faith in adulthood.
- There are three categories of ritual that the church must take into account. This thesis-project focused on the *rites of transformation*. However, a church more fully benefits from such a transformation when there is a consistent educational/discipleship programming, *rites of intensification*, such as a biblically grounded small group ministry or weekly children's/youth programming. A series

of rites of passages thus finds greater benefit when it is structured within a discipleship pathway. In essence, the rites of passage then become the big rocks where the moment in time provides a faith marker that serves as an anchor and as a beacon for the spiritual journey. These established faith markers then provide the confidence an individual needs when they are presented with an inevitable *rite of crisis*, the third type of a rite of passage. A loss of a loved one, divorce, a break-up with a girlfriend all can be comforted with accumulated faith markers. And in some cases, these crises may become faith markers in and of themselves.

- A church's rite of passage structure will find greater success in churches that have an already established family ministry perspective of integrated programming birth through graduation. This is true for two reasons. First, rites of passages are not isolated to a particular life stage. Second, rites of passages are accessible opportunities for the home to take the lead in discipleship.
- For the vast number of churches that do not have the capacity to develop a rites of passages structure, the findings of this paper would suggest that they shouldn't attempt to do so. There is a growing list of people and ministries that are expertly developing strategies and models to help a church integrate a rites of passages model into their existing discipleship pathway. However, the church leader must resist the urge to add a program for the sake of the program. It must be a tool that already aligns with the church's theological and discipleship efforts and the church's missional strategy.

- Rites of passages can be overdone. If the focus shifts to the quantity of rites of passages, then there is the possibility that these rites of passages become less meaningful and impactful. Every church and family may choose differing rites of passages to celebrate, but should not equally celebrate them all. Additionally, a rite of passage can be overdone if the emphasis is on the celebration or party and not on the inclusion back into society. This is similar to spending all of the effort on the wedding and disregarding the marriage.
- Rites of passages are unique opportunities to decompartmentalize spiritual truth and positively express uncertainty. Biblical adulthood occurs when biological, cultural, and economic adulthood is wrestled with and understood within God's design. A biblical worldview speaks to our response in every area of our life. If we start this practice early and for example mark a cultural milestone, such as the first day of school with a spiritual truth, then we begin to reinforce God's interest and purpose in all aspects of our lives.

Our hope is that the emerging generation will grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor among God and man. Biblical adulthood is not automatic and in many ways can get delayed and derailed. I have argued that a potential preventative measure is when the home and the church can leverage significant milestones, coordinate them with a spiritual truth such that a faith marker is created and celebrated by the community of those that have already acquired said faith marker. In coordination with an ongoing

discipleship strategy, the accumulation of such markers will help highlight a path toward a stabilized and growing faith in adulthood.



## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Exemplar Ministries (Rites of Passage)

My Name is Willy Hughes. I have been a pastor in the Northwest for over twenty years. My calling into ministry stemmed from a desire to help children and youth become spiritually and emotionally mature adults.

As a part of my personal growth, I joined a DMIN cohort at Gordon Conwell Seminary in Boston Mass. led by Adonis Vidu, Walt Mueller, and Duffy Robbins. It has been a great three years of camaraderie, personal and intellectual growth. This venture has allowed me to dig a little deeper into the crossfire of discipleship, culture, and theology for the emerging generation. My project that will culminate this experience derives from a ministry aspect that I have been dabbling with for much of my pastoral career; yet, ministry demands have not allowed me to formalize or strengthen its integration into our church's discipleship strategy. This idea revolves around the enactment and celebration of a Rite(s) of Passage structure within a church discipleship strategy. (For the purpose of this survey, I will be using the term "Rite(s) of Passage" to describe the intentional celebration or event marking a transition in an individual's life. Similar terms or phrases others have used: Markers, Transitional Markers, Spiritual Markers, Milestones, Mileposts, Faith Paths, Phases, Ministry Maps, etc.)

I have a six-year old and a three-year old. My twenty-plus years in ministry has both prepared me and scared me for what may lie ahead for my kids and their friends. Adolescence is getting murkier and the need for guides and markers to help kids map out a path from childhood towards adulthood is increasingly critical. I am grateful for the renewed interest in these types of markers or Rite(s) of Passage ideas reclaiming a presence within the children/youth ministry culture. I am grateful for churches like yours that have already begun to wrestle with this aspect of a discipleship strategy. With your help I hope to synthesize your experiences into a resource that will help our churches better integrate such ideas into the discipling of the next generation of believers and give us a clearer picture of how the church and home can use special moments in the life of an adolescent as an opportunity to solidify faith in their transition from childhood to adulthood.

This survey will be confidential and should take no more than 45 minutes to complete. For many, this is asking a lot for an already full schedule. I know that, respect that and will honor that by doing my best with this project. I am also asking you, because I want YOUR thoughts. My goal has been to find a sample of churches that are already walking down this path or are known to be out in front of this discussion. Your name came recommended through exhaustive communications with various church leaders, curriculum writers, ministry experts, authors, church consultants, and barber shop owners. You will be credited and I would love to share my thoughts and results with you, should you desire.

The goal of this survey is to find out a bit about YOU, YOUR ministry setting, and YOUR THOUGHTS about Rite(s) of Passages. Please answer these questions descriptively, not prescriptively. Meaning, answer these questions based on your observations, NOT based on your desire of what should be.

As I am not getting paid, nor writing a book, or am being allocated additional time away from my current responsibilities, this project is simply an extracurricular response to my calling. I genuinely pray that this work honors God and brings glory to his kingdom.

Thank you in advance for your valuable time. I pray that it is rewarded beyond my gratitude.

1. What is the name of your church?

**2. Which best describes your church affiliation?**

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Adventist - Evangelical
- ☐ Anglican/Episcopal - Evangelical
- ☐ Anglican/Episcopal - Mainline
- ☐ Bahai'
- ☐ Baptist - American
- ☐ Baptist - Conservative
- ☐ Baptist - Independent
- ☐ Baptist - Historically Black
- ☐ Baptist - Southern Baptist
- ☐ Baptist - Other
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Holiness - Evangelical
- ☐ Holiness - Mainline
- ☐ Jehovah Witness
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Lutheran - Evangelical
- ☐ Lutheran - Mainline
- ☐ Methodist - Evangelical
- ☐ Methodist - Mainline
- ☐ Mormon
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Nondenominational - Evangelical
- ☐ Nondenominational - Mainline
- ☐ Orthodox
- ☐ Pentecostal - Evangelical
- ☐ Pentecostal - Mainline
- ☐ Presbyterian - Evangelical
- ☐ Presbyterian - Mainline
- ☐ Reformed - Evangelical
- ☐ Reformed - Mainline
- ☐ Other

**3. How would you describe your church culture (traditional, relevant, missional, etc.)?**

☐ Traditional

☐ Relevant

☐ Missional

☐ Other

**4. How would you describe the makeup of your church (middle class, hipster, professional, rural, diverse, etc.)?**

☐ Middle class

☐ Hipster

☐ Professional

☐ Rural

☐ Diverse

**5. What do you think is the most effective thing your church is known for?**

☐ Worship

☐ Community

☐ Outreach

☐ Other

**6. What is your church's average ADULT weekend worship attendance?**

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Less than 25

☐ 26-50

☐ 51-75

☐ 76-100

☐ 101-150

☐ 151-300

☐ 301-500

☐ 501-1000

☐ 1001+

7. What is your church's average PRESCHOOL weekend worship attendance?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Less than 25
- ☐ 26-50
- ☐ 51-75
- ☐ 76-100
- ☐ 100+

8. What is your church's average ELEMENTARY weekend worship attendance?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Less than 25
- ☐ 26-50
- ☐ 51-75
- ☐ 76-100
- ☐ 100+

9. What is your church's average MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL weekend worship attendance?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Less than 25
- ☐ 26-50
- ☐ 51-75
- ☐ 76-100
- ☐ 100+

10. What is the grade/age range of your  
ELEMENTARY department?

.....

11. About how long has the Senior Pastor  
been at this church?

.....

## Responsible Ministry Leader

12. What is your name?

.....

13. What is the title of your position?

.....

**14. What population does your responsibilities primarily oversee at your place of service?**

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Preschool
- ☐ Children
- ☐ Youth/Students
- ☐ College
- ☐ Adult
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**15. About how long have you been in your current position?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**16. About how long have you been on staff at your current church?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**17. About how long have you been in paid ministry?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**18. What is your educational background?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**19. Who or what has been an important influence in your spiritual growth?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**20. Do you have a favorite bible passage, book of the bible, or life verse? If so, what is it?**

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.....

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**21. What are the last three books you have read?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**22. What are the last three ministry conferences you have attended?**

.....

.....

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.....

## **Kindergarten - 12th Grade Ministry Setting**

**23. What percentage of your K-12 would you estimate to be Public School?**

.....

**24. What percentage of your K-12 would you estimate to be Private School?**

.....

**25. What percentage of your K-12 would you estimate to be Home School?**

.....

## **Thinking about Discipleship**

**26. How does your church leadership define discipleship?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**27. What is your church's discipleship strategy?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Rite(s) of Passage Structure**

**Rite(s) of Passage** are transitional phases within life that are formally or informally acknowledged by the home, the church, or society.

**28. What does Rite(s) of Passage mean to you?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**29. What other terms or phrases do you associate with a Rite(s) of Passage concept?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**30. What other terms or phrases are you using to describe this Rite(s) of Passage concept in your ministry setting?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**31. Within the last FIVE YEARS, which of the following Rite(s) of Passage events did your ministry setting intentionally engage?**

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Baby Dedication
- ☐ Preschool to Elementary Transition
- ☐ Elementary to Middle School Transition
- ☐ Middle School to High School Transition
- ☐ High School Graduation
- ☐ Transition beyond High School
- ☐ Gap Year
- ☐ Children's Bible Presentation
- ☐ Confirmation
- ☐ Conversion or Salvation
- ☐ Baptism
- ☐ Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- ☐ "Coming of Age" Ceremony
- ☐ Quinceanera
- ☐ Purity / "True Love Waits"
- ☐ Obtaining a Driver's License
- ☐ Getting a First Job
- ☐ Manhood / Womanhood Ceremony
- ☐ Other: .....



32. **During this 2014-2015 School Year, which of the following Rite(s) of Passage events did (or will) your ministry setting intentionally engage?**

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Baby Dedication
- ☐ Preschool to Elementary Transition
- ☐ Elementary to Middle School Transition
- ☐ Middle School to High School Transition
- ☐ High School Graduation
- ☐ Transition beyond High School
- ☐ Gap Year
- ☐ Children's Bible Presentation
- ☐ Confirmation
- ☐ Conversion or Salvation
- ☐ Baptism
- ☐ Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- ☐ "Coming of Age" Ceremony
- ☐ Quinceanera
- ☐ Purity / "True Love Waits"
- ☐ Obtaining a Driver's License
- ☐ Getting a First Job
- ☐ Manhood / Womanhood Ceremony
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

33. In the UPCOMING 2015-2016 School Year, which of the following Rite(s) of Passage events do you hope your ministry setting will intentionally engage?

*Check all that apply.*

..... Baby Dedication

..... Preschool to Elementary Transition

..... Elementary to Middle School Transition

..... Middle School to High School Transition

..... High School Graduation

..... Transition beyond High School

..... Gap Year

..... Children's Bible Presentation

..... Confirmation

..... Conversion or Salvation

..... Baptism

..... Bar/Bat Mitzvah

..... "Coming of Age" Ceremony

..... Quinceanera

..... Purity / "True Love Waits"

..... Obtaining a Driver's License

..... Getting a First Job

..... Manhood / Womanhood Ceremony

..... Other: .....

## **Rite(s) of Passage Implementation**

34. Of the listed resources, which have you found helpful in thinking about "Rite(s) of Passage".

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Age-Graded Denom. Bible Study Material  
☐ D6  
☐ Denominational Resources  
☐ Faith Path - Lake Pointe Church  
☐ Focus on the Family  
☐ Legacy Milestones (Brian Haynes)  
☐ Mark Holmen  
☐ Orange  
☐ ParentMinistry.net  
☐ Sticky Faith  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

35. Of the listed resources, which have you found helpful in thinking about "Rite(s) of Passage".

Mark only one oval per row.

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Somewhat Unhelpful	Not Helpful	NA
Age-Graded Denom. Bible Study Material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Denominational Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faith Path - Lake Point Church	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Focus on the Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legacy Milestone (Brian Haynes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mark Holmen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Orange	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ParentMinistry.net	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sticky Faith	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36. Other than the resources / organizations listed above, who or what has inspired you to create and implement Rite(s) of Passages into your ministry?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**37. What books have informed your thinking and development of a Rite(s) of Passage structure?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**38. Has there been another church or church leader that has inspired your development of a Rite(s) of Passage structure? If so, who?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Rite(s) of Passage Evaluations**

**39. What aspect of your ministry goals is your implementation of a Rite(s) of Passage structure addressing?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**40. What barriers has there been in your ministry setting that you have had to overcome or must overcome for the Rite(s) of Passage concept to gain additional momentum in your ministry setting?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

41. How do you evaluate a successful Rite(s) of Passage event within your ministry structure?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

42. Please describe the relative importance of the following TWELVE ministry strategies in your context

1 = Highest Importance 12 = Lowest Importance

Mark only one oval per row

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	NA
Awanas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Camps	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Catechism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Church Sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children/Youth Worship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family Events or Experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mission Trips	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rite(s) of Passage Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service Projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Small Groups / Sunday School	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worship (Big Church)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth Group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

43. Was there a ministry strategy omitted in the previous question that is of priority to you? If so what was it and about where would it fall on the importance scale?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**44. What is the most important thing you've seen for a church to do to help promote a Rite(s) of Passage structure?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Philosophical Thoughts**

A part of the discussion of Rite(s) of Passage involves the idea of transitioning from childhood into adulthood. The following questions are designed to gauge your general thoughts as they relate to your ministry setting.

**45. Please complete the following. An individual is no longer a CHILD when...**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**46. Please complete the following. An individual is an ADULT when...**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

47. What age would you consider most people of that age to be an adult? (For example, would you consider that most of the 16 year-olds in your ministry area to be an adult?)

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 11  
☐ 12  
☐ 13  
☐ 14  
☐ 15  
☐ 16  
☐ 17  
☐ 18  
☐ 19  
☐ 20  
☐ 21  
☐ 22  
☐ 23  
☐ 24  
☐ 25  
☐ 26  
☐ 27  
☐ 28  
☐ 29  
☐ 30  
☐ 31  
☐ 32  
☐ 33  
☐ 34  
☐ 35

48. Many would say that the onset of Adulthood begins either with: Biological Factors, Cultural Factors, Economic Factors, or Religious Factors. Based on your perception of these factors, please select the order that best represents your thoughts.

Mark only one oval per row.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Biological Factors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural Factors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Economics Factors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious Factors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>


## Final Question

49. Has there been a question or thought that I did not address, that you believe should have been?

## Thank You!

In the paraphrased words of Andy Dufresne, "If you have come this far, would you be willing to go a little bit further". I would love to view some of your material, ministry maps, metrics, documents as it relates to your Rite(s) of Passage structure. You were recommended as a church that is favorably known for engaging in this discussion. It would be a benefit for this research to view what the best churches are doing with this reemerging idea. If you would be willing, please send or share such to [willy.fbc@gmail.com](mailto:willy.fbc@gmail.com).

In the words of Willy Hughes, there is no way that I can tell you how thankful I am for your willingness and time to help a fellow ministry leader and a church that you do not personally know. I fully believe that these efforts will make a tremendous impact within my local church in Oregon and its realm of influence, but also as Kingdom building work. Thank you very much for your thoughtful answers to these questions. I believe that your diligence and experience in this field will help the church see the long-term benefit of incorporating a Rite(s) of Passage structure in their discipleship process.

Powered by  
 Google Forms



## APPENDIX B

### EMAIL INTRODUCTION

#### Ministry Questions

Inbox x DMIN x



**Willy Hughes** <willy\_fbc@gmail.com>

May 14



to Danny, ▾

Hi Danny,

My Name is Willy Hughes. I dropped you a voice mail earlier today. I am a longtime pastor in Beaverton Oregon. In trying to help our church become more effective in its ministry to the Next Generation of Believers, we are looking at some ideas of adding various Rite(s) of Passage elements to our discipleship strategy. Jeremy Zach mentioned to me that you may be a good contact to learn a bit from.

I would love to schedule a time to talk a bit more of this over the phone or continue the conversation through email.

Let me know if this may be a possibility

Thank you in advance.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **RAW DATA**

#### **Exemplar Churches:**

- **Grace Community Church – (GCC)**
- **(PTCC) Preston Trail Community Church – (PTCC)**
- **(TCAL) The Community at Lakeridge – (TCAL)**
- **(PHCC) Parker Hill – (PHCC)**
- **(EHW) Eastern Hills Wesleyan – (EHW)**

### **CHURCH DEMOGRAPHICS**

#### **What is the name of your church?**

- (GCC) Grace Community Church
- (PTCC) Preston Trail Community Church
- (TCAL) The Community at Lakeridge
- (PHCC) Parker Hill
- (EHW) Eastern Hills Wesleyan

#### **Which best describes your church affiliation?**

- (GCC) Nondenominational – Evangelical
- (PTCC) Nondenominational – Evangelical
- (TCAL) operate as non-dem, sbc backbone.
- (PHCC) Nondenominational - Evangelical
- (EHW) Holiness - Evangelical

#### **How would you describe your church culture (traditional, relevant, missinonal, etc.)?**

- (GCC) Modern church, dim room lights,
- (PTCC) Relevant and seeker driven
- (TCAL) non traditional, cotemporary, seeker sensitive.
- (PHCC) Progressive, missional, attractional. relevant to the culture w/o compromising truth. Roman catholic culture in the background this is what is navigating in the background.
- (EHW) traditional

**How would you describe the makeup of your church (Middle class, hipster, diverse, etc)?**

- (GCC) economically diverse. neighborhood orientated. suburban. Fort Cambelle, largest army base.
- (PTCC) upper middle class, becoming more diverse, primarily Anglo.
- (TCAL) median age, early to mid 30's middle class, blended: Hispanic, Asian, African American.
- (PHCC) diverse, Three campus. middle/upper on campus, offices campus middle/working class, wilksbury is scranton areas, more working class. What do you think is the most effective thing your church is known for? Generosity in the community.
- (EHW) upper middle class, primarily white.

**What do you think is the most effective thing your church is known for?**

- (GCC) how church serves, community and love on community ways to make clarksville a better place.
- (PTCC) Families Open scope definition, two moms, grandparents, aunts uncles, . (Went thought the will machini - aksono - process, to help us define our cause). No perfect people are allowed.
- (TCAL) real life, real community, casual atmosphere, serious faith, Feel like I'm home. Family is our DNA. band, not choir. Promo cards for each series. rescue ship for community not a cruise ship.
- (PHCC) we are the church that is a little bit different that the traditional churches.
- (EHW) Generosity in the community.

**What is your church's average ADULT weekend worship attendance?**

- (GCC) 1000+
- (PTCC) 1800-2000
- (TCAL) 750+
- (PHCC) 1000+
- (EHW) 1000+

**What is your church's average PRESCHOOL weekend worship attendance?**

- (GCC) 100+
- (PTCC) 1000 is family ministry
- (TCAL) 50-100
- (PHCC) 100+
- (EHW) 51-75

**What is your church's average ELEMENTARY weekend worship attendance?**

- (GCC) 100+
- (PTCC) No Response
- (TCAL) 50-100
- (PHCC) 100+

- (EHW) 100+

**What is your church's average MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL weekend worship attendance?**

- (GCC) 100+
- (PTCC) No Response
- (TCAL) No Response
- (PHCC) 100+
- (EHW) 100+

**What is the grade/age range of your ELEMENTARY department?**

- (GCC) K-5
- (PTCC) K-5
- (TCAL) K-4
- (PHCC) K-5
- (EHW) K-5

**About how long has the Senior Pastor been at this church?**

- (GCC) 18 Months
- (PTCC) Co Senior Pastors. Jim prior at Dunwoody GA, where Andy Stanley started NP in basement. They asked Andy Stanely, Andy said they would start with a family experience, in a theatre. 2002.
- (TCAL) 8.5 years. Church start.
- (PHCC) 27 years. Took us through all of the hard stuff.
- (EHW) 6 years

## **RESPONSIBLE MINISTRY LEADER**

**What is your name?**

- (GCC) Chelsea Bayne
- (PTCC) Cindy Fiala
- (TCAL) Brian Swiggart
- (PHCC) Danny Howard., (*Danny Kizer built most*)
- (EHW) Andy Broad

**What is the title of your position?**

- (GCC) Family Ministry Coordinator
- (PTCC) Family Ministry Pastor
- (TCAL) XP and Family Ministries Pastor
- (PHCC) Pastor to Students.
- (EHW) Student Ministries Pastor

**What population does your responsibilities primarily oversee at your place of service?**

- (GCC) Preschool, Children, Youth/Students, College, parents marriages.
- (PTCC) oversee the age-graded staff. We also integrate with other ministries pretty well, for example marriage, women's ministry.
- (TCAL) No Response
- (PHCC) Youth/students
- (EHW) Youth/students

**How long have you been in this position?**

- (GCC) 3.5 Years
- (PTCC) 4.5 Years
- (TCAL) 7.5 Years
- (PHCC) 4 Years
- (EHW) 6 Years

**How long have you been in paid ministry?**

- (GCC) 3.5 Years
- (PTCC) 10 Years
- (TCAL) since 1993.
- (PHCC) 4 Years
- (EHW) 6 Years

**How long have you been a paid staff member of this church?**

- (GCC) 3.5 Years
- (PTCC) 4.5
- (TCAL) 7.5 Years
- (PHCC) 4 Years
- (EHW) 6 Years

**What is your educational background?**

- (GCC) Bachelors in special education
- (PTCC) A.A. Senior women on staff, married, and babies, God is equipping people on the fly.
- (TCAL) hardon simmons, MDiv at SWBTS.
- (PHCC) Bachelors from Summit University in student ministry.
- (EHW) BA Religion from Kingswood University

**Who or what has been an important influence in your spiritual growth?**

- (GCC) Husband. integral part of bringing me to be who God wants me to be, about faith and what it means to be a Christian. My time in the word has been truly transformational. Bible wasn't just a history book, but meant to be a change whom I am in Christ.
- (PTCC) Who - Mentors over the year. Not raised in Christian home, but a leave it to beaver. Saved at roller skating trip, did not know anything about youth groups. Self led until 20's.

Amazing mentor as a young mom, single widowed lady, then asked to volunteer in FBC Bend by a amazing women. Then in SageBrush in New Mexico, felt a ministry calling. Gender was a barrier to calling, but Preston Trail are huge champions in woman in ministry.

- (TCAL) No Response
- (PHCC) College mentor, High school small group leader,
- (EHW) A professor from my University. He showed me that ministry is so much more than what happens within the walls of the church.

**Do you have a favorite Bible passage or book of the Bible? If so, what is it.**

- (GCC) Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
- (PTCC) Hab 2:3, out of the message. *this vision message you have been given is true*, This vision-message is a witness pointing to what's coming. It aches for the coming—it can hardly wait! And it doesn't lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It's on its way. It will come right on time.
- (TCAL) Missed Response.
- (PHCC) Life verse, 1 Cor 10:31, So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
- (EHW) 1 Corinthians 1:27. Keeps me humble! - "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong."

**What are the last three books you have read?**

- (GCC) Men and Women in the church, Best yes, Do Over - Jon Acuff.
- (PTCC) power of habit, leadership books, Henry cloud "for leaders", just lead, Sherry Surratt. Jenny Catron
- (TCAL) Creativity INC, Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace, church unique, circle makers
- (PHCC) Deep and wide, Creating a lead small culture, Lead small
- (EHW) Deep and Wide - Andy Stanley, Sticky Faith - Kara Powell, Leading Change Without Losing It - Carey Nieuwhof

**What are the last three ministry conferences you have attended?**

- (GCC) Church restructuring limited conferences this past year. D6, Catalyst, Orange
- (PTCC) OC15, Catalyst, OC14, shy on conference due to funding and rebuilding.
- (TCAL) married at watermark, may, global leader summit, home paint in march. Many D6 conferences.
- (PHCC) OC15, spoke at 16-5 conference. Acts 16:5 800 church leaders. Orange tour
- (EHW) Orange Conference.

## **K-12 MINISTRY SETTING**

**What percentage of your K-12 would you estimate to be Public School?**

- (GCC) 80%
- (PTCC) 70%
- (TCAL) 70%
- (PHCC) 80%
- (EHW) 90%

**What percentage of your K-12 would you estimate to be Private School?**

- (GCC) 10%
- (PTCC) 15%
- (TCAL) 20%
- (PHCC) 10%
- (EHW) 7%

**What percentage of your K-12 would you estimate to be Home School?**

- (GCC) 10%
- (PTCC) 15%
- (TCAL) 10%
- (PHCC) 10%
- (EHW) 3%

## **THINKING ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP**

**How does your church leadership define discipleship?**

- (GCC) Still trying to figure how God is restructuring us. The past - happens in the context in community. Now, does it mean something different, what does life on life look like. God may put these 5 people in my life to be intentional.
- (PTCC) No Response
- (TCAL) growing to become all that god has become to you to be.
- (PHCC) everybody has a next step. Getting people take a next step i their faith journey. Finding their way back to God. Discipleship happens in circles and not row. small groups, then serving.
- (EHW) Studying and understanding the Scriptures so that we may live it out.

**What is your church's discipleship strategy.**

- (GCC) Community Groups, helping people to be ready for intentional next steps.
- (PTCC) We want people to gather on the weekend, connect in the group because that is where life change, serve in the church, engage your world.

- (TCAL) life together, weekend services, community groups based church,
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) We call them "Discipleship Classes" which are a two year commitment and walk people through the entire Bible. Our pastor believes that by getting our people to understand they Bible in a "bootcamp" type setting, we can send them out to evangelize during the week.

**rites of passage structure: rite(s) of passage are transitional phases within life that are formally or informally acknowledged by the home, the church, or society.**

**What does Rite(s) of Passage mean to you?**

- (GCC) A ROP is a very intentional time between a parent and child that focus on a developmental stage.
- (PTCC) A unique moment in the life of a child that a parent can intentional disciple their child.
- (TCAL) stages of growing in your faith, usually reference to students. took his 13 year boy through a modern day knight. done each with 15-16 years old boys, event did with them. "Bar Barakah" by Craig Hill and "Raising a Modern Day Knight" by Robert Lewis, called our first one a Barakah.
- (PHCC) Manhood events, this is what it means to be a man. Having the talk with the kid.
- (EHW) Identifying key phases in a child's life where the church can come alongside the family to help them celebrate and invest in their child.

**What are other terms you associate with this Rite of Passage concept?**

- (GCC) developmental stages. significant moments in spiritual conversations.
- (PTCC) Milestones
- (TCAL) No Response
- (PHCC) manhood ceremony, mentors speaking into one's life. write a letter to them.
- (EHW) Milestones, Phases

**What other terms or phrases are you using to describe this Rite of Passage concept to your church population?**

- (GCC) No Response
- (PTCC) No Response
- (TCAL) Rites of Passage
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) We call them "Legacy Milestones".



**Within the last FIVE YEARS, which of the following rite of passage does your place of service intentionally engage?**

	(GCC)	(PTCC)	TCAL	(PHCC)	(EHW)
Baby Dedication	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Preschool to Elementary Transition	Yes	2014-2015		Yes	Yes
Elementary to Middle School Transition	Yes			Yes	Yes
Middle School to High School Transition		2015-2016		Yes	Yes
High School Graduation	Yes			Yes	Yes
Transition beyond High School				Yes	
Gap year					
Children's Bible Presentation	Yes				
Confirmation					
Conversion, or Salvation	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Baptism	Yes			Yes	Yes
Bar/Bat Mitzvah					
"Coming of Age" Ceremony	Yes	2015-2016	Yes		
Quinceanera					
Purity / "True Love Waits"	Yes				Yes
Obtaining a Driver's licence	Yes	2015-2016		Yes	2015-2016
Getting a first Job.	Yes, We call it Finances.				
Manhood / Woman Hood Ceremony	Yes				
Other			The Launch		

## **rites of passage implementation**

**Please list any resources you have found helpful in thinking about your inclusion of rites of passages into your programming?**

- (GCC) Did not Respond
- (PTCC) Started with baby dedication BabyD, tweaked it, gave a great format, salvation conversation with kids and parents together. Old program NP used We Believe, they now call it JumpStart. Based on John 3:16, once a month, during one of the service hours, same week every month. A prerequisite for any kid baptism. Vetting system for parents that just want their child baptism checked off. Helps us to have the parents trained and have their leading. Follow up class.
- (TCAL) No response

- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) No Response

Of the listed resources, which have you found helpful in thinking about "Rite(s) of Passage".

	Grace	Preston Trail	TCAL	(PHCC)	(EHW)
Age Graded Denominational Bible Study	Somewhat	NA	NA (elevate) Not helpful for ROP	NA	NA
D6	Very	NOT	Very	Not	NA
Denominational Resources other	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Faith Path/HomePointe Lake Pointe Church	NA	X it was revolutionary, brought awareness. They led the way with the discipleship pathway.	Very	NA	NA
Focus on the Family	Very	Out of Canada for marriage stuff.	NA	Somewhat	NA
Legacy Milestones - Brian Haynes	Very	Very as it brought awareness.,	Very Pivotal in reading - pre cursor to faith path. Brought in momentum	NA	Very
Mark Holman	NA	Very	Very	NA	NA
Orange	Very	Very only as recently, we have been asking it for years.,	Very (Children Min love it)	Very	Very
Parentministry.net	Very	Somewhat Unhelpful	NA	Not	Somewhat Helpful
Sticky Faith	Very	Very - Love Love Love everything.	NA	Very	Very
Other Resources		Jim Burns stuff for High School Helpful for adult voices inclusion.			
Additional Thoughts	(Along with Husband Michael, Helped develop the K-5 material for Parentministry.net)				

**Other than the resources / organizations listed above, who or what has inspired you to create and implement Rite(s) of Passages into your ministry?**

- (GCC) Focus on the Family and Parentministry.net highest inspiration.
- (PTCC) Diana Garland, Baylor Dean of Social Work, comprehensive guide to family ministry...
- (TCAL) Kurt burner suggested him to visit mark holmen at church in Ventura. late 90's First D6's helped think about family ministry...
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) No Response

**What books have informed your thinking and development of a Rite(s) of Passage structure?**

- (GCC) Sticky Faith, Think Orange, Lead Small, Raising kids and Boys Dave Thomas Golf Nashville
- (PTCC) Michelle Anthony, fuller, barna, ReTHInk student books - crawshaw, the small books easy reads about the life and brain of a student. Chap Clark, Secret sauce for us is not picking one thing, our unique gift is that we can help lead family. Take all of this stuff and boil down to a handful of things.
- (TCAL) Modern Day Knight and Bar barakah.
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) Sticky Faith - Kara Powell, Shift - Bryan Haynes, Thinking Orange - Reggie Joiner

**Has there been another church or church leader that has inspired your development of a Rite(s) of Passage structure? If so, who?**

- (GCC) Brian Haynes, Jeremy Lee
- (PTCC) No Response
- (TCAL) Kurt Bruner and Mark Holmen
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) No Response

## **rites of Passage Evaluations**

**What aspect of your ministry goals is your implementation of a Rite(s) of Passage structure addressing?**

- (GCC) True connection with family. Solid data that family comes back to church, when there is hard stuff. They keep lots of anecdotal stories, etc... They keep this stuff and see the fruit on the other side.
- (PTCC) until recently it has been fully developing are age group ministries first. Building project was in the way, unintended consequences required a pause and loss of momentum. Now, we feel we can settle in. Parents are hungry for it.
- (TCAL) Family Ministry Helps
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) It's helping us to partner with families by helping them to be the primary spiritual influences in their children's lives.

**What barriers has there been in your ministry setting that you have had to overcome or must overcome for the Rite(s) of Passage concept to gain additional momentum in your ministry setting?**

- (GCC) How do we best inform parents we even have these helps. How to put information in their hands.
- (PTCC) until recently it has been fully developing are age group ministries first. Building project was in the way, unintended consequences required a pause and loss of momentum. Now, we feel we can settle in. Parents are hungry for it.
- (TCAL) No Response
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) Just to get people to see the value of it. We struggled with attendance in the beginning.

**How do you evaluate a successful Rite(s) of Passage event within your ministry structure?**

- (GCC) Look at child's life over time. We ask parents if they are having hard conversations in the home, signification spiritual conversations. We ask family staff to have these conversation with parents. Then what are parents saying to you.
- (PTCC) By the stories we here. We are intentionally asking a lot of questions. asking why. Preschool has the equity with her people, a culture of story, asking question, evaluating, it just naturally happens. We ask every week, through social medial some one on one, telling me why, tell me what's working, not working. BabyD orientation into BabyD into adult small groups, gives us the great possibly to ask the question. Integrate of ministry.
- (TCAL) Still figuring that out.
- (PHCC) We use to have a family map day, each winter, and people would sit through two workshops, parents would go and sit on these teaching. Not a lot of participation. Put on back burner. Current stuff, we see good response from parents saying it was good events, children talking.
- (EHW) Mainly on attendance and feedback from attendees. If it was well attended and they felt it was valuable, that's a win!

**Please describe the relative importance of the following TWELVE ministry strategies in your context 1 = highest importance, 12 = lowest importance.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	NA
Awanas													x
Camps	x												
Catechism													x
Church Sports										x			
Children/Youth Worship	x												
Family Experiences	x												
Mission Trips			x										
Rite(s) of Passage Events			x										
Service Projects			x										
Small Groups / Sunday School	x												
Adult Worship (Big Church)	x												
Youth Group	x												

**Was there a ministry strategy omitted in the previous question that is of priority to you? If so, what was it and about where would it fall on the importance scale as described above?**

- (GCC) No Response
- (PTCC) No Response
- (TCAL) No Response
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) No Response

**What is the most important thing you've seen for a church to do to help promote a Rite(s) of Passage structure?**

- (GCC) No Response
- (PTCC) No Response
- (TCAL) No Response
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) To build it into the culture of the entire church from the very beginning of a new life. If the lead pastor is behind it, that can't hurt!

**PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS: A part of the discussion of Rite(s) of Passage involves the idea of transitioning from childhood to adulthood. The following questions are designed to gauge your general thoughts as they relate to your ministry setting.**

**Please complete the following. An individual is no longer a child when...**

- (GCC) when they are 26, that is when their frontal lobe stops developing.
- (PTCC) they recognize and own their faith and responsibly for their actions.
- (TCAL) reach a level of maturity.
- (PHCC) beginning to make their own sphere of influence, moving into the preteen age years. They have their own friends. Please complete the following.
- (EHW) When they are responsible for themselves financially.

**Please complete the following. An individual is an adult when...**

- (GCC) live life responsibility.
- (PTCC) no longer obligated to their parents.
- (TCAL) launch out of the home.
- (PHCC) when they are forty jk. When they move out of the house.
- (EHW) Financial Independence

**What age would you consider most people of that age to be an adult? (For example, would you consider most of the 16 year-olds in your ministry area to be an adult?)**

- (GCC) 25

- (PTCC) 18 because can serve in the military, vote,
- (TCAL) 23
- (PHCC) 19
- (EHW) 18

**Many would say that the onset of Adulthood begins either with: Biological Factors, Cultural Factors, or Religious Factors. Based on your perception of these factors, please select the order that best represents your thoughts.**

(GCC)	(PTCC)	TCAL	(PHCC)	(EHW)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural</li> <li>• Religious</li> <li>• Biological</li> <li>• Economic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious - "because they own their own sin and living out their purpose."</li> <li>• Biological</li> <li>• Cultural</li> <li>• Economic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural - "teenagers are not rowing up and feel they should"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural</li> <li>• Economic</li> <li>• Biological</li> <li>• Religious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural</li> <li>• Biological</li> <li>• Economic</li> <li>• Religious</li> </ul>

## FINAL QUESTION

**Has there been a question or thought that I did not address, that you believe should have been?**

- (GCC) Closing Thoughts: ROP stuff as ministry leaders we need to ask is how to help parents do this. We look at the content, but not how it looks. Is this meaningful to the parent, not just the child. We do this because it helps parents disciple kids.
- (PTCC) Last 10% is what we call it...we fully believe rather you call it orange or purple, we believe there is a significant role that family plays and the church plays, combined they are greater than the sums of the parts, we believe it and we see, we see the parents that are going this right, we know it. The church is not the final authority in the life/discipleship of the child, we decentralized as much as we can. Not our role, push it back to the home. Historically, we have done a good job of feeding information, but not the so what?, Vision of our family ministry is that every family has at least one spiritual conversation every week.
- (TCAL) No Response
- (PHCC) No Response
- (EHW) No Response

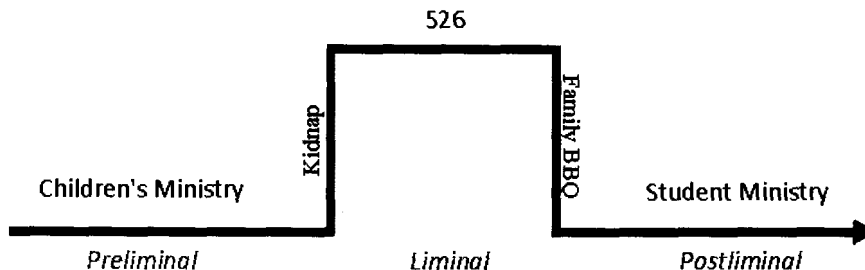
## APPENDIX D

### ADVENTURE 526 ROCKS

#### Adventure 526 Rocks

Each fall First Baptist Church of Beaverton promotes their children to the next successive grade. Fifth grade marks the end of their involvement with children's ministry and sixth grade marks the beginning of their involvement with student ministry. In order to help the individual and the family make this transition, FBCBeaverton student ministry developed a '526 Rocks' rite of passage event. The date and time of this event was left as a surprise to the exiting fifth grader. On an early morning in August, the student and children leaders would visit all of the homes of the fifth graders, wake them out of bed and usher them into a waiting vehicle to embark on a one-day journey of transition. This 'Kidnap' symbolized their separation from children's ministry. Once all of the students were gathered, the second phase commenced.

The next 12 hours were marked with breakfast, a quest to discover a thunderegg, the state rock of Oregon, and a blindfold trust-walk led by the student ministry's student leaders. These events were designed to provide a physical challenge (finding the rocks), and emotional challenge (a long day), and a psychological challenge (trusting older students). After a student-led devotion, the initiates were reunited with their families and other students for a barbeque and final charge that became their act of reincorporation into the student ministry. As the day ended, the initiate, their family, and the student ministry all understood that the initiate is no longer a fifth grader, a member of the First Baptist Church of Beaverton's children's ministry, but rather a member of the First Baptist Church's student ministry.



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